

THE 10 COMMANDMENTS - PART 12

The Two Great Commandments

Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage:	Matthew 22:34-40
Subject:	How Jesus responded when a Scribe asked Jesus which was the greatest of the commandments?
Complement:	He summarized the commandments in two great principles: love God and love your neighbor.
Exegetical idea:	When Jesus was asked by a Scribe which was the greatest of the commandments, He summarized the commandments in two great principles: love God and love your neighbor.
Homiletical idea:	Love the LORD our God with all that is within you and love your neighbor too.
Purpose:	To emphasize to my hearers that the heart of the commandments is love with God's love and to encourage them to actively love God and love their neighbors.

Introduction

Hallelujah! Hallelujah! I will bless the LORD at all times! His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD! How many times I have prayed the words of the Psalmist, "Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law." And now, O LORD my God, you have opened my eyes, and I have seen wonderful things in Your law. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! (Cover head) I will praise You, O LORD, with my whole heart. I will tell of all Your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You. I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High!

Permit me to introduce myself. I am Eleazar Ben Shammua. Perhaps you have heard of me. I am a well known Scribe here in Jerusalem. I do more than write the law, like the ancient scribes. I am an interpreter of the Law. A teacher of the Law. I was educated at the feet of the great teacher Gamaliel. All of my life I have studied the Torah. I have studied the sacred writings of the prophets. I have studied the Halachah and the Haggadah.

But today the LORD our God has opened my eyes and I have seen wonderful things in His law! Hallelujah. I just talked with Yeshua of Nazareth. Perhaps you are surprised that I spoke with Him. Have you heard that we Scribes are opposed to Yeshua? Well, it's true that most of the Scribes are opposed to Yeshua. They accuse Him of trying to destroy the Law and the Prophets. But there are some of us, some of the leaders of the Jews who sense that there is something special about this Teacher. Did not Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin, testify that Yeshua was a teacher sent from God?

So I determined that I should try to meet Yeshua personally. Nicodemus had met with Yeshua secretly, at night. I heard the amazing account of that meeting! I did not know when or where I would meet Yeshua. But I was determined that I would meet Him. Then I heard that some Sadducees were planning to challenge Yeshua publically, and so I followed them through the streets to where Yeshua was teaching the people. I am not one of them number. I am not a Sadducee. I am a Pharisee! So I followed from a distance, and some of my colleagues who are also Pharisees came with me.

We listened carefully from the edge of the crowd as Yeshua responded to the questions that the Sadducees hurled at Him. He spoke with such authority, an authority that startled me. Yeshua rebuked the Sadducees for not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God! It was clear that Yeshua was not like them! He knew the Scriptures and the power of God. I had heard the reports of the sick who were healed, demon-possessed who were set free, and even the dead who were raised to life again! Yeshua not only spoke with authority. He lived with authority. He knew the Scriptures and the power of God.

The Sadducees were silenced! Muzzled, like a disobedient ox that refused to listen to its

master! For a moment, all was quiet. None of the Sadducees dared to ask Yeshua any more questions. That's when I saw my opportunity. Actually, some of my Pharisee friends gathered around me and urged me to test Yeshua. Maybe the crowd thought that I was just trying to be clever, or difficult, but the LORD our God knows my heart. I was seeking to know the truth. And so I said to Yeshua, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

I had carefully studied the Law of God. I had studied the ten sayings that the LORD our God spoke from Mount Sinai, and wrote with His finger on tables of precious stone. And I had studied the hundreds of other commandments that had been written by the teachers of the Law to put a hedge about those ten sayings. And I had studied the thousands of legal interpretations. But which was the greatest commandment in the Law?

Perhaps some people gathered around expected Yeshua to name one of the 10 sayings written by the LORD our God on tables of precious stone. "I am the LORD your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me." Or "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Each one of the ten sayings is important.

But Yeshua did not quote one of the ten sayings. Rather, He said, "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the first and the greatest commandment!" As He spoke, He smiled. And I knew that He loved the LORD our God with all His heart and soul and mind and strength.

As Yeshua spoke, I could see that He loved the LORD our God with all His heart, and with all His soul, and with all His mind, and with all His strength. Yeshua had told Nicodemus, that God so loved the world! And now Yeshua was telling us that the greatest commandment of

all is to love the LORD our God in return, with all that is within us!

His words made so much sense to me. For years I had been preoccupied with hundreds of laws, thousands of legal interpretations. So much information. So many opinions. But Yeshua identified that which was most important: Love the LORD our God, and to love Him with all that is within us! Did not King David himself declare, “Love the LORD, all His saints!” (Psalm 31:23) Oh, bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name!

Yeshua was still smiling and I smiled in return. I sensed that He understood the joy that was in my heart. Had not the prophet Isaiah declared that the word of the LORD would not return to Him void, but it would accomplish what He purposed. And that we would go out with joy and be led forth with peace. The mountains and the fields would break forth in singing and all the trees of the fields would clap their hands? Hallelujah! My heart was filled with joy as the word of the LORD accomplished what He purposed: Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and with all your strength.

I was deep in thought when Yeshua spoke again: “And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” What did Yeshua mean? The second is like it? In what way was this second commandment like the first? Simple. Clear. Love. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. Both speak of the love of the LORD our God flowing through us. We are to love the LORD our God with all that is within us and we are to love our neighbors too.

Yeshua had taught on many occasions about loving our neighbors. I had heard the reports. Yeshua had told His disciples to love one another as He had loved them. He even told them to love their enemies. On one occasion, Yeshua told about showing love to a neighbor. A

certain traveler was on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. That traveler was attacked by robbers. Now that was no big surprise to anyone. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho is a dangerous road! So it was no surprise to hear that a man had been attacked by robbers. But the rest of the story was shocking to some. According to Yeshua, a priest came down the road, saw the man who had been robbed and beaten, but showed no compassion toward him. The priest passed by on the other side of the road. Then a Levite came. He also saw the man who had been robbed and beaten. But he also showed no compassion toward him. The Levite also passed by on the other side of the road. I don't know if that was a true story or not. But it certainly could have been. I know many priests and many Levites who would not have stopped. In fact, when I heard the story, I asked myself the question "Would I have stopped to help the wounded traveler?" "Would I have shown compassion toward him?" Do I love my neighbor?

That wounded traveler might have died there on the side of the road from Jerusalem to Jericho were it not for another traveler who passed by. This traveler was a Samaritan. Now we Jews have nothing to do with Samaritans. We are very unloving toward them. But unlike the priest and the Levite, this Samaritan had compassion on the wounded traveler. He stopped, bound the man's wounds, put the wounded traveler on his own donkey, and carefully brought him to a place of safety. He even paid the Innkeeper to care for this wounded traveler. Now that was a living example of loving a neighbor as yourself!

Yes, Yeshua had much to say about love. Loving God with all of your heart and with all of your soul and with all of your mind and with all your strength and loving your neighbor as yourself. I looked up again and Yeshua was still looking at me, and smiling. When I looked into His eyes, the words of the Psalmist flashed into my mind: "O LORD, you have searched me and

known me, You know my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thoughts afar off. You comprehend my paths, and my lying down. And are acquainted with all my ways.”

I was startled. It was as if I heard the word of the LORD speaking directly to my own heart. Then Yeshua said these words: “All of the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments!” I had to think about that comment for a moment. I had never heard anyone use that expression before! Like hanging something on a hook! All of the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments! Love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. All of the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments! These two great commandments don’t do away with all of the other sayings in the Word of God. These two great commandments are a summary of all the Law and the Prophets.

I thought about the 10 sayings that the LORD our God spoke on Mount Sinai and wrote with His finger on tables of precious stone. If you love the LORD your God with all that is within you, you will shall have no other gods before Him. If you love the LORD your God with all that is within you, you will not make any craved images and bow down to them and serve them. If you love the LORD your God with all that is within you, you will not take His name in vain. If you love the LORD your God with all that is within you, you will remember His Sabbath day to keep it holy. All of those sayings hang on the great commandment—love the LORD your God with all that is within you.

And the second is like it. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you will honor your father and your mother. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you will not murder. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you will not commit adultery. If you love your neighbor as yourself,

you will not steal. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you will not give a lying witness against your neighbor. If you love your neighbor as yourself, you will not covet anything that is your neighbor's. On that second great commandment hang all of those sayings.

Love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. "All of the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments!" Not just the 10 sayings which the LORD our God wrote with His finger on tables of precious stone. But all of the Law and all of the Prophets. All of it!

It was so simple and so clear. Love the LORD your God with all that is within you and love your neighbor too! So simple and so clear. Love the LORD your God with all that is within you and love your neighbor too! Why do we try to make truth so complicated?

I looked at Yeshua with great respect and love. I wanted Him to know that I had listened attentively to His teaching. "Well said, teacher," I said to Him. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." After I said those words, I realized that I didn't repeat His teaching exactly. But He knew my heart. He knew that I had not only heard His teaching, but I had received it with an open mind and with an open heart. Love the LORD our God with all that is within us and love our neighbors too.

Then Yeshua had a word especially for me! Yes. Especially for me. He looked directly at me and He said, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." Those words flooded my soul like a river of joy. Not far from the kingdom of God! Yeshua had begun His teaching ministry

by declaring that the Kingdom of God is at hand! He had traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. But Yeshua also said that whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. Nicodemus testified that Yeshua had told him that unless we are born again, we cannot not enter the kingdom of God.

I must ask Nicodemus what Yeshua meant by that. “You must be born again!” If a person must be born again to enter the kingdom of God, I need to know what that means. I don’t want to just be “not far from the kingdom of God.” I want to be part of the kingdom of God. Don’t you? It’s not enough to just be “not far from the kingdom of God.” I want to be part of the kingdom of God!

Perhaps being born again means a whole new life, a whole new way of thinking, a whole new way of living. Where I trust in the LORD to save me because He is my Rock and my Salvation! And my greatest desire will be to love the LORD our God with all my heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love my neighbor too.

(Cover my head) Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name! I will praise you, O LORD, with my whole heart. I will tell of all Your marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in You. I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High. You have opened my eyes and I have seen wonderful things in Your Law. I will bless the LORD at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD. The humble shall hear of it and be glad. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together!

Narrative:

Scribe: Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?

Yeshua: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. [30] Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'

All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Scribe: Well said, teacher.

You are right in saying that God is one
and there is no other but him.

To love him with all your heart,

with all your understanding

and with all your strength,

and to love your neighbor as yourself

is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

Yeshua: You are not far from the kingdom of God.

Matthew 22:34-40

Hearing that Yeshua had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. [35] One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: [36] "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

[37] Yeshua replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' [38] This is the first and greatest commandment. [39] And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' [40] All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Mark 12:28-34

One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Yeshua had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

[29] "The most important one," answered Yeshua, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. [30] Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' [31] The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."

[32] "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. [33] To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."

[34] When Yeshua saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.