

The Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25- 37)

Jesus' final response to the inquiring expert of the Law/Jewish Religion who asked, "What must I do to inherit eternal life", justifies his "Greatest 1 Command" as being the true greatest objective for humanity. This expert didn't know who his neighbor was, yet he knew the 2 great commandments: Deut. 6: 5 & Lev. 19: 18, from the Old Testament. He may have learned of these 2 commandments from Jesus' earlier discourse with a Pharisee who asked, "Which is the greatest commandment?" (Mark 12: 28, 34) Perhaps, Jesus may not have been the first to teach these 2 commandments as being the greatest, for it could have been a Jewish tradition. If the latter circumstance were true, Jesus would have just been repeating tradition, and not instituting the 2 commandments as being the greatest 1 of all time. Moreover, this expert in the Law was just trying to justify himself when he asked, "Who is my neighbor?" He was not yet justified, but was not FAR from the kingdom of heaven/love, as was the Pharisee who asked which is the greatest commandment. When one has LOVE, they will know who their neighbor should be. For example, the non-religious tax collector, acting in love, knew his neighbor and was justified by Jesus, while the expert in the Law from Luke and the Pharisee from Mark 12 were not! This brings us to another very important point. Just because one confesses (as did the Pharisee and many still do to this day, that God's will is for persons to love God with all ones heart, mind and strength, and to love ones neighbor as thyself) this does not necessarily mean that those individuals are accepted, or that they have love, in the measure to which God wants us to have love.

Early in his ministry, Jesus was limited in his preaching, because he had not yet fulfilled the Jewish religion to the full extent that he came to show humanity. Jesus loved us to death; literally to – the – death. His death fulfilled his statement, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (St. John 15: 13 – N.I.V.) This behavior fulfills all Bibles/Religions/Systems by Jesus and his followers. (Romans 13: 8- 10) Also, Jesus could not preach to others to follow in his steps until his last step was accomplished. (1 John 2: 6) (St. John 19: 28- 30) Only then, could he make emphasis, through example, for others to love each other "as" he had done. In addition, St. Paul taught Christians (after Jesus' finished work) that to love one another is the greatest, even greater than faith. (Corinthians 13: 13) Nowhere in the New Testament would one find the Apostles admonishing the Spirit filled community with the 2 combined commandments: Deut. 6: 5 & Lev. 19: 18. Therefore, when Jesus told the expert in the law, "Do this and you will live," (referring to the horizontal commandment: Lev. 19: 18, as his story shows) he was only agreeing to what was still binding from the fading Jewish System. (Luke 10: 28) (Heb. 8: 13)

In a similar situation, Jesus sent a person to sacrifice an animal. Please read the following verse: 4) Then Jesus said to him, "See that you don't tell anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the gift Moses commanded, as a testimony to them. (Matt. 8: 3, 4) – Are we to sacrifice an animal for our sins, just because Jesus told that individual to do so? And is the greatest commandment the old traditional 2, because he told the Pharisee to do them? We must read the Bible in its historical setting and complete our understanding of the context of the texts; "for the letter kills, but the complete understanding and spirit of the text gives life (2nd Corinthians 3: 6)." Most importantly, we must realize two different dispensations, with Christ as the changing point. (Hebrews 7: 12) The Old and the New have been fused for too long. This results in division, double mindedness, and double standards.

Consequently, since Jesus' personal story was still unfinished, he told the "Good Samaritan" story as the best representation of his assertion, because love can be best visualized horizontally, in action. We believe that sometime in his life, Jesus may have actually helped people in this way, but he didn't attribute the story to himself, because he was humble. In verse 37 of Luke 10, the expert in the law answered, "The one who had Mercy on him." To which Jesus replied, "Go and do likewise." This is what is meant when he commands us to love each other, in the way he loved us, which is exemplified by personal examples and his stories.

In conclusion, to inherit eternal life, one must obey Jesus. He specifically stated, "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth." (St. John 14: 15- 17) Only through this counselor (Holy Spirit) can one produce the love fruits of the spirit. (Galatians 5: 22) There was a measure of the Spirit before Christ, but not in totality until after Jesus' resurrection, such as in the day of Pentecost and up to the present. (St. John 7: 39 & 16: 7) (Acts 1: 4, 5 & 2: 1- 4) Therefore, the Spirit does not come by law, or by the Old Testament's 2 great commandments, or from another religion's similar commandments. (Galatians 3: 2, 5, 10) It comes by practicing Jesus' exemplified person to person ministry, summarized by his "Greatest 1 command"! (St. John 13: 34)