



Love in the Last Days

"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. (John 13:34)

A "commandment" is a very special thing within Scripture. I know that we sort of treat everything within Scripture as a commandment in view of the fact that all of God's Word must be obeyed, but in reality a commandment is a very specialized thing. A commandment is something God has specifically ascribed as a responsibility we must maintain in order to live in a covenant relationship with Him. In the Old Testament a covenant relationship not only meant keeping the core Ten Commandments initially given by the very hand of God Himself, but Jewish scholars will quickly point out that the Torah actually contains a total of 613 commandments which must all be maintained. Jesus summarized them all as loving God with all one's heart and loving one's neighbor as their self: *"On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets"*. (Matthew 22:40) So how do we know for sure that Jesus was not merely giving us commandment number 614? Because from this point on, no one ever again quotes from the commandments of the first tablet; they only quote this new commandment as the fulfillment of the **whole** Law.

James is probably the earliest epistle written and distributed among the church. What does James say at the very beginning to the 1st Century church?

*If, however, you are **fulfilling the royal law** according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. (James 2:8)*

James never quotes from the first tablet (the commandments about our contractual relationship with God); he only quotes from the second tablet (the commandments about our contractual relationship with others).

Galatians is most likely the first epistle written by Paul. What did Paul have to say about this at the outset of his own ministry?

*For **the whole Law is fulfilled** in one word, in the statement, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." (Galatians 5:14)*

Paul never quotes from the first tablet, he only quotes from the second.

Years later at the height of his ministry Paul writes to the Romans. Has anything changed in Paul's message over time?

*Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for **he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law**. For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law**. (Romans 13:8-10)*

Paul still resists quoting from the first tablet. The fulfillment of the entire Law is found in Christ's summary of the second tablet to love others.

And at the end of the 1st Century church when all the Apostles have gone to be with the Lord except John, the one we have come to call "the Apostle of Love" because such was the overwhelming focus of his

teachings, what was the message preached by John in his own ministry and life?

*By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. For **this is the message which you have heard from the beginning**, that we should love one another; (1 John 3:10-11)*

*And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just **as you have heard from the beginning**, that you should walk in it. (2 John 6)*

NO ONE quotes from the 1st Tablet ever again. Why? Because the proof that you are in a New Testament covenant relationship with Christ, the proof that you do indeed love God, is proven by your love for others. You cannot love God if you do not love others! You cannot fulfill the obligations of the whole covenant and claim that you love God if you fail to also love others.

I have witnessed people who in the name of their denomination or ministry have actually laid aside consideration for others because of the false notion that they have a “higher” calling to the things of God. I have known churches and leaders who have made decisions at the expense of the flock because they think they have a “higher” duty to first honor God. Biblically there is no justification for such behavior. This is exactly what Jesus chided the Pharisees for doing when they deemed it acceptable to redirect the financial support they would normally provide parents into a special gift given in the name of God to the Temple. (Mark 7:9-13) Even before Christ’s New Testament summation of the Law into this new commandment God never intended that “ministry” or “church” would justify such compromises in how we treat others.

In fact, this teaching is of such paramount importance, I would offer that it is central to what the true Body of Christ is held accountable for in the shadow of the Last Days. What is important under normal

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circumstances becomes even more important and amplified in priority as the intensity of the birth pangs of these final hours increase in both frequency and strength. That which is crucial in the course of everyday life becomes multiplied in importance in times of testing and trial. Consider carefully how Jesus ends the Olivet Discourse where He tells His followers what they are to do when they see all things prophetic coming to fulfillment:

“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left.

“Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ‘For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’

*“Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ The King will answer and say to them, **‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.’***

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.’

*“Then they themselves also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?’ Then He will answer them, **‘Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not***

do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.'

"These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-46)

Look at the criteria Jesus uses for separating the sheep from the goats: it all comes from the 2nd tablet! There is nothing here referring to **anything** from the 1st tablet!

In other words, Jesus does not say, "You goats violated the 1st commandment when you worshiped another god so you're out, but you sheep worshiped the One True God so you're in".

Jesus does not say, "You goats violated the 2nd commandment when you worshiped graven images so you're out, but you sheep did not so you're in".

Jesus does not say, "You goats violated the 3rd commandment when you took God's name in vain so you're out, but you sheep never did that so you're in".

In fact, much to the chagrin of my Seventh-day Adventist friends, Jesus does not even say, "You goats violated the 4th commandment when you did not keep the Sabbath so you're out, but you sheep kept the Sabbath so you're in".

What is most important in the course of everyday Christianity becomes even more important in the Last Days. They are separated based not on keeping the 1st Tablet, but the 2nd Tablet by the quality of their love for others.

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What exactly is a Christian supposed to do when they realize that the whole of biblical prophecy is coming true around them? The answer is to return with even greater fervor and zeal to the things which set them apart most from the world in the first place. I think this is precisely why Jesus went out of His way to state that one of the defining characteristics of the Last Days is a loss of love.

“Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. (Matthew 24:12-13)

I think if Bible prophecy conferences were truly successful at empowering and inspiring Christians to undertake what is most important in these final hours that they would actually be called “love” conferences. Christians would see that their efforts to personally address the needs of others is actually the substance of God’s End Times economy. Instead of titillating the brain we would return to the core contributions of a faithful and loving heart with an even greater fervor than previously recorded. We would not be able to pass on any opportunity to exhibit the love of Christ at a time when it is needed even more than ever.

In His Love,

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