

The Greatest Commandment

Key Verses: *“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”*
—Mark 12:30,31

Selected Scriptures:
Leviticus 19:18;
Deuteronomy 6:4-9;
Mark 12:28-34

rejection and crucifixion of Jesus, which he accurately predicted. It was evident that the Jewish leaders understood the meaning of the Lord's words.—vs. 12

OUR LESSON BEGINS WITH

Jesus' stinging indictment of the Jewish religious leaders through the use of parables. They were guilty of rejecting him as the Son of God. The Lord explained that it was God who planted the house of Israel and provided them with the divine law. He had also given them the testimony of various prophets to keep the nation separate from all the surrounding heathen influences. Thus, it should have been expected that with such tender care and supervision, through gratitude and obedience, the Jews would have been prepared to accept Jesus as their Messiah.—Mark 12:1-11

Regrettably, the same hardness of heart which caused the nation to reject God's law and the warnings issued by righteous prophets, also would lead to the

Jesus also encountered opposition from the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection. They referred to a stipulation in the Mosaic Law (Deut. 25:5-10), whereby if a man died childless, his brother should marry the widow to maintain the family name and property interests. In posing a hypothetical case, the Sadducees asked Jesus if a woman married seven brothers who died one after the other, whose wife she would be in the resurrection.—Mark 12:18-23

Jesus indicated that God had power to raise the dead, but also that marriage then would no longer exist. Additionally, Jesus reminded the Sadducees that when appearing to Moses at the burning bush, the Heavenly Father revealed himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If there were no hope of a resurrection, no such an assertion would have been given. A scribe who had heard the Master's response to the Sadducees appreciated his answer and then inquired of Jesus what was the greatest of all commandments.—vss. 24-28

In our Key Verses, our Lord asserted that supreme love for God and loving one's neighbor summarized the intent of the Decalogue. This scribe manifested sincerity of heart and agreed with Jesus that sincere worship of God with one's entire heart, soul, and strength, as well as loving one's neighbor as himself, would be the most important things anyone could do—more so than the ceremonial offerings and sacrifices of the Law. Jesus acknowledged his right attitude of heart by saying, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."—vs. 34

As consecrated believers in Christ, let us always manifest both aspects of the Master's response in our lives in all that we say and do. "If a 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? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."—I John 4:20,21 ■