

Session 2: Passion For Jesus

The First Commandment: To Love God with All-Consuming Passion

*Then one of the scribes... asked Him, 'Which is the first commandment of all?' Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. **And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.**" This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself". There is no other commandment greater than these. Mark 12:28-34*

It's always been all about Love

Note that these are Old Testament laws: respectively Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and Leviticus 19:18. The mistake most commonly made by people when they come to the Bible, and particularly the Old Testament, is to see it primarily as a rule-book, when actually it is a love-story. Though the Bible undeniably contains a lot of rules—the Jewish rabbis count 613!—when we look closely at these rules (that is, 'the Law [of Moses]'), we find that, in its **content**, its **context**, and its **consummation**, even the Law is in fact a Law of Love.

First, consider the **content** of the Law: Jesus taught that the most important (Mark 12:29) rules are simply 'to love': first, to "Love YHWH your God with all your heart and soul and strength" (Deut. 6:4) and second, to "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). These two commands in fact summarise and include all the others (cf. Rom. 13:8-10, Matt. 7:12). So the Law which God gave Moses is first (in 'the 10 Commandments') an expansion in general terms of what it means to "love YHWH your God" (the first tablet) and to "love your neighbour" (the second tablet); and then a specific contextual application for the people of Israel at that time of what it would look like in the nitty-gritty legal realities of everyday life to love people (Ex. 21-23) and to love God (Ex. 25-30; Lev. 1-27)—we can call these the civic and the ceremonial laws, or the political and the priestly laws.

Second, the **context** of the Law:

"I am YHWH YOUR God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" Exodus 20:2.

*"YHWH your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples on the face of the earth. It is not because you were more in number than any other people that YHWH set his love on you and chose you... but it is **because YHWH loves you** and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers" (Deuteronomy 7:6-8).*

Third, the **consummation** of the Law: After laying out the conditional blessings and curses of the covenant, the Law of Moses then records YHWH's promise that even in the case of complete disobedience on the part of God's people, *"I will not spurn them, neither will I abhor them so as to destroy them utterly and break my covenant with them, for I am YHWH their God. But **I will for their sake remember the covenant** with their forefathers, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am YHWH"* Leviticus 26:44-45

*If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. Then **the Lord your God will bring you to the land** which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. **And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart** and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.*

Deuteronomy 30:4-6

The First Commandment is more important than the Second Commandment

And behold, a certain teacher of the law stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?" So he answered and said, "**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbour as yourself.'**"

And Jesus said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" Then Jesus answered and [told him the parable of the Good Samaritan]. Then Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But **one thing is necessary**, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." Luke 10:25-42

- The right answer!
- But the man was still trying to justify himself.
- And he fails to distinguish the First and Second Commandments.
- Whereas Luke deliberately places M&M's story next to show the distinction of priority.
- Not about justifying apathy to people, but giving permission for total devotion to God.
- One thing is necessary – cf. Psalm 27:4, Philippians 3:13; and conversely Mark 10:21.

This is offensive to some people

Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said, "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always." John 12:1-8

- Martha is still the one dutifully serving, Mary still shows no sign of doing so!
- Three hundred denarii is a year's wages – so equivalent to £20,000!
- Is this good stewardship? Jesus seems to think so! Indeed, "wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told" (Mark 14:9).

So we need the right theological paradigm: Jesus is our Bridegroom, we are His Bride

Lazarus sat **at the table** with Jesus. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of **spikenard**, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair, and the house was filled with the **fragrance** of the oil. John 12:2-3

While the king is **at his table**, my **spikenard** sends forth its **fragrance**. Song of Songs 1:12

- John in writing the Gospel is deliberately drawing out parallels with the Bridegroom and Bride in the Song of Songs: note the repetition of 'spikenard', 'fragrance', 'at the table'.

Others who had this revelation

John the Baptist

Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification. And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"

*John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' **He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice.** Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all. John 3:25-31*

Paul the Apostle

*For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For **I have betrothed you to one husband**, that I may present you as **a chaste virgin to Christ.** 2 Corinthians 11:2-4*

*Husbands, love your wives, **just as Christ also loved the church** and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and **the two shall become one flesh.**" **This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.** Ephesians 5:25-32*

Jesus Himself

The Friends of the Bridegroom

The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were fasting. Then they came and said to Him, "Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but Your disciples do not fast?"

*And Jesus said to them, "**Can the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them?** As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days. Mark 2:18-20*

Parable of the Wedding Feast

*And Jesus answered and spoke to them again by parables and said: "**The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son**, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. Again, he sent out other servants, saying, 'Tell those who are invited, "See, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and fatted cattle are killed, and all things are ready. Come to the wedding.'" But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding is ready, but those who were invited were not worthy. **Therefore go into the highways, and as many as you find, invite to the wedding.**' So those servants went out into the highways and gathered together all whom they found, both bad and good. And the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

"But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he

was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

Matthew 22:1-14

Parable of the Virgins

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

*"And at midnight a cry was heard: '**Behold, the bridegroom is coming**; go out to meet him!' Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise answered, saying, 'No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.*

"Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.'

"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.
Matthew 25:1-13

Prophetic End-time Emphasis on Bridegroom God

Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready."

Revelation 19:6-7

The Spirit **and the Bride** say, "Come."

Revelation 22:17

*"In **that day**," declares the LORD, "**you will call me 'my husband'**"; you will no longer call me 'my master.'*

Hosea 2:16

*It will no longer be said to you, "Forsaken," Nor to your land will it any longer be said, "Desolate"; But you will be called, "My delight is in her," ["Hephzibah"] And your land, "Married" ["Beulah"]; For the LORD delights in you, And to Him your land will be married. 5For as a young man marries a virgin, So your sons will marry you; And **as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So your God will rejoice over you....** Isaiah 62:4-5*

Some Implications

Intimacy **As** the Father has loved me, **so** have I loved you. Abide in my love. John 15:9

Partnership To him who overcomes I will grant to sit **with Me** [Jesus] on My throne... Rev. 3:21

Maturity ...the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has **made herself ready**. Rev.19:7

The Foundation

We love because he first loved us.

1 John 4:19

**Hear, O daughter, and incline your ear
Forget your people and your Father's house
The King is calling you, the King is calling you...**