

A NEW COMMANDMENT

Jesus Christ clearly stated the two great commandments from which all the Law is derived:

[FV] MATTHEW 22:36-40 Master, which commandment [is the] great commandment in the Law?" 37 And Jesus said to him, " 'You shall 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 [one is] like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

There is nothing new about either of these as the first is quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5 and the second from Leviticus 19:18. In fact, the Law of Love existed long before the existence of mankind because God IS love (1 John 4:8, 16), so the Law of Love has existed eternally.

However, consider what Jesus said after Judas left the table during the Passover:

[FV] JOHN 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you: that you love one another in the same way that I have loved you, that [is how] you are to love one another. 35 By this shall everyone know that you are My disciples—if you love one another.

Jesus calls this a NEW commandment; but why is this new? The Law of Love was recorded thousands of years ago; however, notice that Jesus directs the disciples to love ONE ANOTHER and doesn't mention their *neighbors*. Why did Jesus single out the relationships of disciples? Were the disciples so hard hearted that they needed to be admonished to love one another? Was He implying that they didn't need to love their neighbors?

Jesus came to fulfill spiritual understanding of the law so a NEW COMMANDMENT is not only surprising but critical for Christians to understand. The Law of Love is fulfilled in keeping God's commandments (John 14:15) so a new commandment of love is really a conundrum because the commandments were also given thousands of years before.

[FV] MATTHEW 5:43-48 You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 So that you yourselves may be [the] children of your Father Who [is] in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on [the] evil and [on the] good, and sends rain on [the] just and [on the] unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not the tax collectors practice the same [thing? [47 And if you salute your brethren only, what have you done [that is] extraordinary? Do not the tax collectors practice the same [thing?] 48 Therefore, you shall be perfect, even as your Father Who [is] in heaven is perfect.

These scriptures confirm that Jesus wasn't telling the disciples to only show love among themselves; instead, they were to show love toward ALL mankind. So we are still left with the question: what is the NEW commandment? The answer to that lies in comparing what was said in the beginning to what Jesus said during the Passover. Look at what God said originally:

[FV] LEVITICUS 19:18 ... you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I [am] the LORD."

Now, look again at what Jesus told the disciples:

[FV] JOHN 13:34-35 A new commandment I give to you: that you love one another in the same way that I have loved you, that [is how] you are to love one another. 35 By this shall everyone know that you are My disciples—if you love one another.

The original commandment was based upon love of SELF, something the physical Israelites could understand. Only those begotten of God are able to understand the love of God.

[FV] 1 JOHN 4:7-8 Beloved, we should love one another because love is from God; and everyone who loves has been begotten by God, and knows God. 8 The one who does not love does not know God because God is love.

It was only with God's Spirit IN us that anyone can understand the agape of GOD. That Passover was the appointed time for Jesus to make known the fullness of the NEW commandment that God's people are to love EACH OTHER AS JESUS CHRIST LOVED US! The NEW commandment is that we show a special agape love toward brothers and sisters in Christ. In fact, the Greek word for *new* does not mean the opposite of old as in age. It means *unheard of* or *fresh*. This was something the world had never heard. The standard for the Law of Love was no longer based upon physical, human behavior but upon GOD. In this commandment, Jesus Christ completed the work He mentioned in [FV] MATTHEW 17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.”

The original commandment to love our neighbor AS OURSELF is reserved for the unconverted because they do not have the agape love of God in them; however, the begotten children of God have something that transcends human love. Because of our special relationship with God, we not only have a command to show agape to our brethren but we have a need and desire, just as God, “With [earnest] desire I have desired” (Luke 22:15) to show agape unto us. Brethren, we fulfill God's work in us if we perfect His agape in us:

[FV] 1 JOHN 4:16-17 And we have known and have believed the love that God has toward us. God is love, and the one who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him. 17 By this [spiritual indwelling], the love [of God] is perfected within us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment because even as He is, so also are we in this world.

Let God's agape REIGN in our hearts!