

INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

(By E. O. SELLERS, Director of Evening Department, The Moody Bible Institute, Chicago.)

LESSON FOR SEPTEMBER 6

THE GREAT COMMANDMENTS.

LESSON TEXT—Mark 12:28-34.
GOLDEN TEXT—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." Luke 10:27.

This lesson considers a third question asked of our Lord; two others in this connection we studied last week. It was not so much a question of placing one commandment in competition with another, but rather which commandment most clearly epitomizes or reveals the final principle in law. It was the business of this scribe to know the law and to interpret the commandments. Jesus in his reply quotes from Deut. 5:4, and from Lev. 19:18, which are both in a sense an exposition of the Decalogue.

Love the Basis.

I. The answer of Jesus, vv. 28-34. The scribe's question seemed to be quite specific and so the Lord strikes at once at the heart and by his quotation reveals to us the fact that the principle which is the inspiration of the law is that of love. In passing we have here another illustration of the master's ready use and knowledge of the Scripture. Jesus makes a four-fold summary. Man must love God with (a) the heart, e. g., in sincerity and uprightness; (b) with the soul, with the warmth of the emotions, and the feelings; (c) "with all thy mind," the intellect, not as a blind devotee; (d) with "strength," viz., with intensity of service, with energy. "To love God with all the heart and soul and mind and strength is to have supreme desire for and delight in God's glory, making everything else second to that." This statement is but half, for the complement of our love of God is to love man. Man created in God's image was "so loved" by God that he gave his son (John 3:16); man can do not less and must express that love in service to others. To fail in the first is to break the greatest of the commandments and therefore to be guilty of all, Rom. 3:23.

Human and Deity.

II. The question of Jesus, vv. 35-

37. Our Lord's question in return was a Messianic one and he grounds his argument on the 110th Psalm, a Messianic one. Jesus is inferior to David as his son according to the flesh but superior to him as lord of the kingdom of which David himself is a subject and not the sovereign. Christ is both human and deity; his kingdom is spiritual and earthly sovereigns are honored if they are his subjects.

III. The teaching of Jesus, vv. 38-40. The word "doctrine" in verse 38 is translated "teaching" in the revision. These words of warning are full of solemn significance. The scribes, and they have their imitators today, sought the places of preferment, the seats of honor in the synagogue and the chief places at the feasts. The motive that governed them was a selfish one. They devoured widows' houses, and sought to cover their covetousness and dishonesty by long prayers and a pretense of piety. This brought upon them the "greater condemnation," Matt. 23:23. Law and love is here again in contrast. Law must become life.

IV. The view of Jesus, vv. 41-44. Jesus had one look of love and compassion for his friends and the needy and another that was exceedingly terrible for his enemies. Thus it was as a master teacher that he saw right at hand an illustration for his lesson, an application of the truth in the case of the widow who gave out of her penury and because of her love for God, supporting these carping, selfish scribes. She had two mites (about fourth-fifths of a cent) and might have

withheld one except that the rabbis forbade the offering of a single one. Her love, however, went beyond the "tenth" and she gave "all," therefore in proportion to their means she "cast more than they all," see II Cor. 8:12. Offerings are needed still for the Lord's work. Jesus is "over against the treasure" and "sees" who it is that "casts in" how much they cast and the motive behind the gift. The master's standard of a commendable offering is not according to our superfluity, but our deficiency, not what will be missed but what of sacrifice and in proportion thereto. Not to please man, but God. Read II Cor. 8:1-3. Our Lord's valuation of gifts cast into the treasury remains for all time the true standard of measurement.

The love of God unifies a man. We love because he first loved us, and in proportion as we truly apprehend his love, all that we have of heart, life, strength and mind, yea, our whole nature will unite in love. It is this which unifies society. To love him that begets is to love him that is begotten. To love God is to love man and to keep all of the divine commandments that concern our relations to him.

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