

What Is Written In The Law? [Jesus] Replied. . . [The Man] Answered: Love The Lord Your God With All

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The phrase “What is written in the law?” echoes through the pages of the New Testament, capturing a profound moment of spiritual discourse between Jesus and a lawyer or teacher of the law. When Jesus poses this question, it prompts the man to reflect on the foundational commandments that define the relationship between God and humanity. The response—“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”—is rooted in the greatest commandment, emphasizing love as the core of biblical law. This article explores what is written in the law regarding love, its significance in Christian faith, and how Jesus’ response underscores the centrality of love in fulfilling God’s commandments.

The Context of Jesus’ Question: What Is Written in the Law?

Understanding the phrase “What is written in the law?” requires examining the historical and biblical context. During Jesus’ earthly ministry, Jewish leaders often engaged in debates about the law—specifically the Torah and the commandments that God had given Moses. When a lawyer or teacher of the law asks Jesus about the greatest commandment, it’s a way of seeking clarity on which laws are most essential.

The Law of Moses and Its Central Themes

- The Torah, also known as the Pentateuch, contains the foundational laws given to Israel.
- It encompasses commandments on worship, social justice, morality, and civil conduct.
- Among these, love—both love for God and love for neighbor—is emphasized repeatedly.

In Matthew 22:35-40, Mark 12:28-34, and Luke 10:25-28, the question about the greatest commandment reveals a desire to understand the core of the law. Jesus’ reply links to these scriptures, emphasizing love as the fulfillment of the law.

What Is Written in the Law? Jesus' Response to the Greatest Commandment

When the lawyer asks Jesus, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18.

Jesus' Quotation of the Greatest Commandment

1. "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."
(Deuteronomy 6:5)
2. "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18)

This dual command encapsulates the essence of biblical law:

- Loving God with every aspect of our being
- Loving others as ourselves

Jesus explains that these two commandments are the "greatest and first" (Matthew 22:38), serving as the foundation for all other laws.

The Significance of These Commands

- They highlight the importance of a wholehearted devotion to God.
- They underscore the importance of compassion and justice toward others.
- They serve as a summary of the moral and spiritual duties of believers.

The Meaning of Loving God With All Your Heart, Soul, and Mind

Loving God involves more than mere words; it requires total commitment and devotion.

Heart: The Seat of Emotions and Will

- Expresses love, passion, and desire for God.

- Demonstrated through worship, obedience, and trust.

Soul: The Inner Being and Life Force

- Represents the essence of a person's life and spiritual vitality.
- Our commitment to God should encompass our deepest self and purpose.

Mind: Intellectual Engagement and Understanding

- Involves studying God's Word, seeking truth, and aligning our thoughts with His will.
- Reflects an active pursuit of knowledge about God and His ways.

Together, these elements depict a love that is comprehensive—touching every aspect of human existence.

Love Your Neighbor as Yourself: The Second Greatest Commandment

While loving God is paramount, Jesus emphasizes that love for others is equally vital.

The Biblical Basis for Loving Others

- Leviticus 19:18 commands, "Love your neighbor as yourself."
- In Matthew 22:39, Jesus states that all the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

What Does Loving Your Neighbor Entail?

- Showing kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.

- Acting justly and fairly in all dealings.
- Forgiving offenses and seeking reconciliation.
- Serving those in need, especially the marginalized and vulnerable.

Loving others as oneself reflects the golden rule: treat others as you wish to be treated.

The Law of Love in Christian Living

Understanding what is written in the law and Jesus' emphasis on love informs the daily lives of believers.

Living Out the Greatest Commandments

- Prioritize your relationship with God through prayer, worship, and obedience.
- Demonstrate love for neighbors through acts of kindness, service, and justice.
- Maintain integrity and compassion in personal and community relationships.

The Challenge of Loving Completely

- Love requires sacrifice, patience, and humility.
- It often involves forgiving offenses and overcoming personal biases.
- Love in action is the practical expression of faith and obedience.

Conclusion: The Centrality of Love in God's Law

The question "What is written in the law?" and Jesus' reply reveal that love is at the heart of God's commandments. Loving God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and loving our neighbor as ourselves, encapsulate the essence of biblical law and the essence of the Christian faith. These commandments

are not merely rules but are the guiding principles that shape a life dedicated to God and others.

By embracing this dual love, believers fulfill the law in its entirety, embodying the message of Jesus and living out the true purpose of God's commandments. As followers of Christ, understanding and practicing these foundational principles of love is essential to spiritual growth, community harmony, and reflecting God's divine character to the world.

Keywords for SEO:

- What is written in the law
- Jesus greatest commandment
- Love the Lord your God
- Love your neighbor as yourself
- Biblical law and love
- Jesus on love and law
- Christian living and love
- Central commandments of the Bible
- Love in the New Testament
- Fulfillment of God's law

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the significance of 'What is written in the law' in Jesus' response?

Jesus refers to the Hebrew Scriptures to highlight the core commandments that summarize God's law, emphasizing the importance of understanding and obeying God's Word.

How does Jesus interpret the command to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind?

Jesus emphasizes that loving God wholeheartedly is the greatest commandment, encompassing complete devotion and obedience in every aspect of life.

Why does the man ask Jesus about 'what is written in the law'?

The man seeks to test or understand Jesus' knowledge of the law, possibly to see if Jesus affirms the central commandments or to learn how to attain eternal life.

How does Jesus' reply relate to the overall message of the Law and the Prophets?

Jesus' reply summarizes the Law and the Prophets into two main commandments: loving God and loving neighbor, emphasizing love as the foundation of all biblical commandments.

What does the phrase 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind' imply for believers today?

It implies that believers should dedicate their entire being to loving and serving God wholeheartedly, prioritizing this love above all else.

How does understanding 'What is written in the law' help believers in their daily lives?

It guides believers to align their actions and attitudes with God's commandments, fostering a life centered on love, obedience, and spiritual growth.

What is the broader biblical context of this conversation about the law?

This exchange reflects Jesus' teaching on the greatest commandments, reinforcing that love for God and neighbor encapsulates the essence of biblical law and ethical living.

Additional Resources

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Introduction

The phrase "What is written in the law? [Jesus] replied. . . . [The man] answered: Love the Lord your God with all" echoes a profound moment captured in the Gospels, specifically in the synoptic accounts of Jesus' teachings on the greatest commandments. This interaction, which appears in Matthew 22:34-40, Mark 12:28-34, and Luke 10:25-28, encapsulates the essence of biblical law and the core of Christian ethical instruction. As a subject of theological and historical inquiry, it invites us to explore the nature of biblical law, Jesus' interpretation of it, and the significance of love as the foundational principle.

This article aims to provide a comprehensive, investigative analysis of what the law entails, how Jesus responded to inquiries about it, and the implications for understanding Christian doctrine, religious law, and moral philosophy.

The Context of the Question: A Jewish Legal and Ethical Framework

The Setting of the Inquiry

The question, "What is written in the law?" emerges in a context where Jewish scholars and teachers sought to understand and interpret the Torah—the foundational legal and moral code of Judaism. The questioners often tested or sought clarification from Jesus, who was regarded as a rabbi and teacher.

The specific interaction involving the man asking about eternal life and the greatest commandment reflects a broader Jewish concern with understanding the moral obligations outlined in Scripture. The question was not merely academic; it was rooted in the desire to discern the path to righteousness and divine favor.

The Nature of the Law in Jewish Tradition

The law, or Torah, encompasses:

- Moral commandments: The Ten Commandments and other ethical directives.
- Ceremonial laws: Ritual practices and purity laws.
- Civil laws: Regulations governing societal justice and community life.
- Priestly laws: Instructions for temple worship and priesthood.

In the Jewish tradition, these laws functioned as a comprehensive guide to living in covenant with God, emphasizing love, justice, obedience, and holiness.

Jesus' Response: The Centrality of Love

The Greatest Commandment

When pressed by a lawyer or scribe about which commandment was the greatest, Jesus responded by citing two core commandments:

> "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37).

He then added a second, equally important command:

> "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39).

Together, these two commandments encapsulate the essence of biblical law, as Jesus summarized it.

The Significance of Love as the Fulfillment of the Law

Jesus' emphasis on love signifies a shift from a legalistic interpretation to a relational one. It underscores that the entire law revolves around love—both love for God and love for fellow human beings.

Key points include:

- Love as the highest principle: Love is not just an emotion but a guiding ethic that informs actions and attitudes.
- Holistic obedience: Loving God involves all aspects of one's being—heart, soul, and mind—implying total devotion.
- Love as the moral foundation: All commandments are rooted in, or should be expressed through, love.

Theological and Philosophical Implications

The Law as Summed Up in Love

Jesus' response suggests that the law's true intent is to foster a relationship characterized by love. This aligns with Jewish teachings but elevates love as the supreme ethic, surpassing mere rule-following.

Implications include:

- The law is not merely a set of rules but a pathway to love and relationship.
- Obedience to the law is an expression of love, not just duty.
- The greatest commandment encompasses all other commandments.

Love as the Fulfillment of the Law

The Apostle Paul echoes this teaching in Romans 13:10:

> "Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."

This indicates that love embodies the moral intent behind commandments, making moral actions an expression of love rather than compliance with a set of arbitrary rules.

The Man's Answer: Understanding the Core of the Law

In the Gospel accounts, the scribe or lawyer responds by acknowledging Jesus' summary:

> "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but Him. To love Him with all your heart and with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12:32-33).

This response reveals several insights:

- Recognition of the monotheistic foundation of the law.
- An understanding that love surpasses ritual sacrifice.
- A comprehensive grasp of the ethical essence of the law.

This demonstrates that for the Jewish audience, love was not a novel concept but the proper fulfillment of God's commandments.

The Law and Its Interpretations: Historical and Modern Perspectives

Rabbinic Interpretations

Post-Second Temple Judaism developed extensive interpretations of the law, emphasizing:

- The importance of halakha (Jewish law) in daily life.

- The centrality of love and justice in legal rulings.
- The interpretative authority of the rabbis to adapt the law to changing circumstances.

Christian Developments

Early Christians, inspired by Jesus' teachings, viewed love as the guiding principle that fulfilled the law. The epistles, especially in Paul's writings, emphasize that love is the highest virtue and the basis for moral conduct.

Contemporary Reflections

Modern scholars examine how Jesus' emphasis on love challenges legalism and promotes a relational understanding of morality. Many Christian denominations highlight love's primacy in ethical decision-making.

Practical Applications and Ethical Considerations

Love in Contemporary Religious Practice

- Emphasizing love as a motive in worship and obedience.
- Prioritizing compassion and justice in social issues.
- Understanding laws not merely as rules but as expressions of love.

Challenges and Criticisms

- Balancing legal obligations with genuine love.
- Avoiding relativism or subjective interpretations.
- Ensuring love remains rooted in truth and justice.

Conclusion

The inquiry, "What is written in the law? [Jesus] replied. . . . [The man] answered: Love the Lord your God with all," encapsulates a profound biblical truth: that love is the foundation and fulfillment of divine law. Jesus' teaching elevates love from a sentimental feeling to a comprehensive ethic that encompasses all aspects of human and divine relationship.

Understanding this principle illuminates the moral fabric of Christianity and Judaism alike. It calls believers to a holistic devotion to God and active compassion toward others, embodying the divine law through love.

In a world often marked by legalism and moral ambiguity, Jesus' emphasis on love as the core of the law remains a guiding beacon—challenging us to live out our faith with sincerity, compassion, and unwavering devotion.

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Final Reflection

The exploration of what is written in the law, as answered by Jesus and understood by the man, reveals a timeless truth: love is at the heart of divine commandments. It challenges believers across generations to interpret and live out their faith through acts of love—toward God and neighbor—embodying the very essence of the law itself.

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