

## Love of God in the Gospels

Fred R. Coulter—January 3, 1996

The title of this sermon is *The Love of God in the Gospels*—minus John 13 through 17, the reason being is because those five chapters are very, very important in relationship to the Passover and the covenant that we have with God, and those will require special, detailed study to understand the love of God and to understand what we need to know as far as the Passover is concerned.

Let's begin by coming to Matthew 24; here is a warning that is given to us concerning what the world is like. Many times what the world is like is also reflected in the Church. We've seen that this has really been a problem in a lot of the relationships with the congregations, with each other, with the ministers and teachers to the brethren, and the brethren back to the ministers and teachers. And with all the confusion that's going on today we can see that this certainly *has* happened and *is* happening.

Now let's come to Matthew 24:12: "And because [iniquity] lawlessness shall be multiplied... [‘iniquity’ comes from the Greek word ‘anomia’—which means *against law* or *lawlessness with the purpose in mind of knowing that there is law*, but *directly defying the laws and commandments of God.*] ...the love of many shall grow cold." *Sin kills love!* The ‘many’ here means the *majority*. It grows cold. Why?

When people commit themselves to another person—in an attitude of love, friendship and closeness—and *it is ruined by sin*, then the person who has been expressing love withdraws that love and is afraid to really commit in the kind of relationship that is truly loving. Then we have kind of an arms-length, distant, non-loving relationship which develops. This is exactly what we see in the entire world today. This is exactly what we have seen has been happening in the Churches of God.

Luke 11:37 becomes a very important thing for us to understand concerning the love of God in the Gospels. Here is what is happening with the ‘religious’ leaders. This has also happened with the ‘religious’ leaders within the Church of God.

Luke 11:37: "Now, while He was speaking, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him; and He went in *and* sat down. But the Pharisee, seeing *this*, wondered why He had not first washed before dinner" (vs 37-38). This was the ‘religious’ ceremony. The Jews were normally in the habit of asking a blessing before they started the hand-washing, then a blessing when they started the meal,

and then when they came to certain courses of the meal they would also ask blessings. They were very ‘religious’ and fastidious in what they did. Notice that Jesus was not interested in winning friends and influencing people for the sake of compromising love. The love of God requires all your effort, and we'll have to conclude that Jesus loved the Father, and that's one of the reasons why He did what He did.

But notice what He said to the Pharisee, Verse 39: "Then the Lord said to him, ‘Now, you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish... [Yes, everyone is interested in the outward appearance, the outward part of the cup and platter.] ...but inside you are full of greediness and wickedness.’"

Love must come from the heart, and *if the heart has not been made right there is no love*. You cannot put on a façade out here by having things look good on the outside, even by having sort of a friendliness toward other people. That may not necessarily be true love at all. It may be just friendliness toward another person.

Jesus wanted to make sure that they understood what He was talking about, so He says, v 40: "Fools, *did* not He Who made the outside also make the inside?" *Yes, He did!* He created the outside *and* the inside! So, to clean the outside and not the inside is the big problem that a lot of people have. Remember the Psalm of David when he repented of the affair with Bathsheba? What did he say? ‘*You desire Truth in the inward parts.*’ and ‘*O God, create in me a clean heart.*’ That's what Jesus is telling them here, that they do not have a clean heart.

So, He says now, v 41: "Rather, give alms *from* the things that are within; and behold, all things are clean to you.... [In other words, don't be self-centered; don't be so picky; don't come in with a smile on your face and a battle-axe in your hand.] ...But woe to you, Pharisees! For you pay tithes of mint and rue and every herb, but you pass over the judgment and the love of God...." (vs 41-42).

Now we're going to see that the love of God—as we have seen all through this series—is *the foundation of our relationship with God*. You cannot have a relationship with God without loving Him; *it's an impossibility!* You cannot have a formal, hands/arms-length relationship with God. He wants a close relationship with you with your heart. What happens when you get a lot of teachers, like the

Pharisees, who didn't know the love of God? Didn't teach the love of God? Look what happens: *You end up with just all of the self-righteousness that they had and become hypocritical in it.*

"...you pass over the judgment... [that is, true judgment, that is true, righteous judgment] ...and the love of God... [it's important for us to understand that true, righteous judgment comes from the love of God] ...It is obligatory *for you* to do these things, and not to set aside those *lesser things*" (v 42). He's saying, primarily, that you need to have done the judgment and the love of God, and not leave the other things undone either.

Verse 43: "Woe to you, Pharisees! For you love... [here's the kind of love that they had]: ...For you love the chief seat in the synagogues and the salutations in the marketplaces.... [They had their hierarchy and they lifted themselves up—didn't they?] ...Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!..." (vs 43-44). Another word or another explanation of the word hypocrite is this: *sanctimonious pretenders.*

They can pretend on the outside, but what is it really like on the inside? That's what Jesus is teaching here. It doesn't matter what's on the outside; God looks at the heart—doesn't He? *Yes!* So, what is on the inside is the most important thing.

Verse 44: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are as unseen tombs... [Just like walking through a graveyard. In other words, covered over; you can't see them; you're walking on them] ...and men who walk over *them* do not know *it.*' And one of the doctors of the law answered *and* said to Him, 'Teacher, *by* saying these things You are also insulting us.' And He said, 'Woe to you also, doctors of the law!....'" (vs 44-46).

If you're going to love God, one of the things that is going to happen, you're going to be like Jesus Christ. You're going to see things in their true perspective. They didn't have the love of God, and they were deliberately going against God. Jesus Christ was straightforward toward them, and as we say in today's parlance, called a spade *a spade.* So, the lawyer said, 'Now look, You're offending us.'

Verse 46: "And He said, "Woe to you also, doctors of the law! For you weigh men down *with* burdens heavy to bear... [they make decisions and say you have to carry this out] ...but you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers." You wouldn't think of doing that to yourselves, but you think of doing it to other people in your judgments.

Verse 47: "Woe to you! For you build the

tombs of the prophets, whom your fathers killed. Therefore, you are bearing witness and consenting to the **works** of your fathers... [*deeds* of your fathers,' the ones who killed the prophets.] ...for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs" (vs 47-48). 'My, let's have a tomb to this wonderful prophet.' Then what you do, you change the whole thing. Now it becomes a monument that you use, that you own control, that you make part of your own manipulation of the people in a status quo for your own hierarchy.

Verse 48: "Therefore, you are bearing witness and consenting to the works of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs. Because of this, the wisdom of God also said, 'I will send prophets and apostles to them; and *some* of them they shall kill, and *others they shall* drive out'" (vs 48-49). If you're truly going to love God, you're walking into the enemy's camp, and this is what they're going to do to you. He says the reason that He was bringing this judgment upon them and being so straightforward and specific about it is because:

Verse 50: "'So that the blood of all the prophets, poured out from *the* foundation of *the* world, may be required of this generation From the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias, who perished between the altar and the house *of God.*' Yes, I tell you, it shall be required of this generation" (vs 50-51). Why? Because they said, '**We** know.' Because they said, '**We** are doing the will of God,' and they weren't doing it.

Verse 52: "'Woe to you, doctors of the law! For you have taken away the key of knowledge..." When you make so many rules and regulations and minutia of things to do and not do, then you lose the key of knowledge. Why did God give the knowledge in the first place? And also, as it says in Matt. 23—which is a similar, parallel account—they also take away the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Not only the key of knowledge, but the key of the knowledge of salvation.

"...you yourselves did not enter, and you prevented those who were entering." (vs 48-52). You won't let them get away with doing the things that God really wants. You want them to do your thing. You want them to be corralled in your own little fence-work here, and make sure that you have dos and don'ts and this and that so that they are controlled. Understand something very important: ***God does not want anyone to control anyone else's free moral agency.***

In rearing children, that's a little bit different case. But when they get older, guess what happens

when they see they have their free moral agency? Then what happens? *One of the first things they do to their parents is say, 'Don't tell me what to do anymore.'* The whole thing that God wants, He wants your free choice, your free moral agency to love Him. Not build up this kind of thing that we see here, where they stop off the free moral agency, where they stop off the love of God. And this has been too big of a problem within the Churches of God.

Verse 53: “And as He was saying these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began vehemently to press and provoke Him to speak about many things... [They wanted Him to keep talking so they could try and catch Him in His words, and then have Him arrested and exterminated. Why? *Because* He wasn't fitting into their little box.] ...while they kept a close watch on Him, seeking to catch something out of His mouth so that they might accuse Him” (vs 53-54).

This flows right into it, Luke 12:1: “During this *time*, an innumerable multitude was gathering... [While all this discussion was going on, many people were coming in and gathering around. They were seeing what was this debate that was going on.] ...*crowding* so close together that they were stepping on one another. First of all He began to speak to His disciples, *saying*, “Guard yourselves from the leaven of the Pharisees, **which is hypocrisy.**”

That is the opposite of love. Hypocrisy is not only *sanctimonious pretending*, it is that *you have your own agenda on the inside* that you keep secret to yourself, your own sin. You put a façade out here on the front to make yourself look righteous. We have seen that, but this is, in particular, a great sin among the leaders: the Pharisees, the scribes, and also the ministers in the Churches of God today.

Here is a guarantee that Jesus said: you're not going to mock the love of God; you're not going to get away with these things, v 2: “For there is nothing covered that shall not be uncovered, nor hidden that shall not be known.” God is going to make it known. There are ministers who are great hypocrites, who are trying to hide their own sins and their own sexual immoralities today, and deny it in the face of great evidence, contrary to their denial. ***It's going to be known. That's part of the exposing of the love of God!*** You cannot truly enter into a relationship with someone unless you know what's in their heart. That's why the love of God is so important. That's why He is bringing this out in relationship to their lack of love and how the love of many grows cold.

Verse 3: “Therefore, whatever you have spoken in the darkness shall be heard in the light; and what you have spoken in the ear in closed rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops.” Now we're living in an age, a time, when that is so and it's going to be. Just no way around it.

Let's see what Jesus said concerning them. Jesus is talking again to the religious leaders. Jesus is telling them exactly what they need to know. When you're confronted with someone who has hatred toward God as they did, who rejects God as they did, yet, at the same time claiming ‘we are God's representatives’—notice what He says:

John 5:36: “But I have a greater witness than John's...” They didn't go to John that they might be baptized and they might be saved. Remember what John said when the scribes and Pharisees came? He said: ‘You hypocrites and vipers and snakes in the grass! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore, repent, and bring forth fruits of repentance.’

He says: “But I have a greater witness than John's; for the works that the Father gave Me to complete, the *very* works that I am doing, themselves bear witness of Me that the Father has sent Me.... [they couldn't miss this message] ...And the Father Himself, Who sent Me, has borne witness of Me.... [that is, by the works and by the healings and by the miracles which were done.] ...**You have neither heard His voice nor seen His form at any time**” (vs 36-37).

This is talking to the Pharisees. This is very important for us to understand. Mystic Judaism had that if you go through the various layers of the scribes and Pharisees and Essenes and Theraputae, that in this mystic religion you would rise to a certain point and you would see the light of God. You would see God and you would hear His voice. Jesus is going right to the heart of the mystic religion of Judaism by saying:

Verse 37: “You have neither heard His voice nor seen His form at any time. And you do not have His Word... [the Word of God] ...dwelling in you...” If you have the Word of God living in you, then you're going to have the love of God because the two go hand-in-hand. God is love, and if you have the Word of God abiding in you, being written in your heart, mind, soul and being, then you're going to have the love of God.

Because of that, He says: “...for you do not believe Him Whom He has sent.... [that is, the Father sent Christ] ...You search the Scriptures... [He's telling them, ‘Go look in the Scriptures’] ...for in them you think that you have eternal life; and they are the ones that testify of Me.... [All of the

Prophets, the Law and the Palms testified of Him—did it not? When He says, ‘Search the Scriptures,’ He means the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms.] ...But you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men; but I have known you. I have known you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.... [it’s not within] ...I have come in My Father’s name, and you do not receive Me; *but* if another comes in his own name, you will receive him” (vs 38-43).

Yes, because they come around with all the flattery and backslapping and all of the pseudo-sanctimonious, pretending, exterior love that people have. No, you don’t have the love of God in you.

Verse 44: “How are you able to believe, you who receive glory from one another, and do not seek the glory that *comes* from the only God?” That’s what needs to be, brethren. That’s why the Apostle Paul did many of the things that he did, and said many of the things that he said, and wrote the things that he wrote. He was not concerned with honor from men. He even said that, ‘If I please men, I should not be the servant of God.’ When this is carried in relationship to the Church, in relationship to the world, and people go back into the world for their approval and the honor of those in the world, they are not seeking the honor that comes from God.

Verse 45: “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is *one* who accuses you, *even* Moses, in whom you have [trust] hope.” They really didn’t trust in Moses. It’s like everything else, they take a name and use it, and keep repeating it and magnifying it.

However, what they were doing is teaching their own doctrines. We’ve seen that happen—haven’t we? Haven’t we heard the names of various men touted? I remember one time I was listening to a sermon, and this man was preaching. He mentioned this ‘great’ evangelist over and over again. He mentioned his name—I forget how many times, but it was well over 60 times that he mentioned the name of the man—and he mentioned Christ eight times. Whose honor was he seeking? *Well that’s very self-evident.* The same way here with the scribes and Pharisees.

Verse 46: “But if you believed Moses, you would have believed Me; for he wrote about Me. And if you do not believe his writings, how shall you believe My words?” (vs 46-47). It’s an impossibility!

Let’s see how the Father loved Christ, and Christ loved the Father. If we have Christ in us, what are we going to do? We are going to love Christ and we are going to love God the Father—are we not? *Yes we are!* Then we’re going to see that we’re

going to love each other.

This is John the Baptist who’s talking and they wanted to know, ‘How come Jesus is doing more baptizing than you?’ And he said, John 3:30: “It is ordained that He increase and that I decrease He Who comes from above is above all... [Christ is above all] ...The one who is of the earth is earthy... [You think of that in relationship to trying to give yourself eternal life. None has done it yet, have they? *No!* You are of the earth.] ...and speaks of the earth... [carnal-minded, thinks of things of the flesh only] ...He Who comes from heaven is above all; And what He has seen and heard, this *is what* He testifies; but no one receives His testimony.... [because He doesn’t need it] ...The one who has received His testimony... [that is, the testimony of Jesus Christ] ...has set his seal that God is true” (vs 30-33). That is, you *affirm* and *know* and have *sealed* in your own heart and mind *that God is true.*

Verse 34: “For He Whom God has sent speaks the words of God... [That’s referring to Jesus Christ. We’re going to see that’s what He spoke. He didn’t speak anything else. He didn’t speak His own ideas, He didn’t do His own thing; He never did anything that was not pleasing to the Father. Why? *Because He loved the Father and the Father loved Him!*] ...and God gives not the Spirit by measure *unto Him* [Christ].”

Verse 36: “The one who believes in the Son has everlasting life; but the one who does not obey the Son shall not see life, for the wrath of God remains on him.”

So, we have this clear-cut: *you either love God or you don’t!* You can’t have it halfway in between, because that’s part of the earth—that’s earthy. Earthiness means *you go to God and tell Him that you love Him, but all the while all you want are the blessings,* and you’re not willing to suffer the hard times and the difficult times, and you don’t want to have any persecution. As a matter of fact, if those things come, then those who don’t have the love of God get mad at God, get angry at God: ‘God, how could you allow this to happen?’ Well that’s not the attitude that Christ wants us to have.

Verse 35: “The Father loves the Son... [*an ongoing love,* and it has to be the same way with us. If we’re going to receive the ongoing love of the Father just like He is loving the Son.] ...and has given all things into His hand.” That’s why you have to believe on Him, because He gave Jesus Christ. Everything They did was done in love. There was not one thing that They did not do in love.

John 10:14: “I am the good Shepherd, and I know those who *are Mine,* and am known of those who *are Mine*”—*continuous knowing; continuous*

*relationship, continuous ongoing* receiving of God's Spirit.

That's why if you're going to love God you're going to be motivated from the inside. Those religious leaders who do not love God have to motivate people from the outside, and have to put fences around them, and controls around them, and has to try and restrict the free moral agency of the people because the people are carnal, and the leaders are carnal, and they are not internalizing the love of God.

Verse 15: "Just as the Father knows Me, I also know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.... [He did it because He loved them.] ...And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring those also, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one flock *and* one Shepherd. On account of this, **the Father loves Me...** [Why? *Because Christ was willingly laying down His life!*] ...because I lay down My life, that I may receive it back again (vs 14-17). That's why the Father loves Him. Tremendous! Absolutely tremendous!

Notice how much we're in John here to start with, because this gives us a good foundation. Again, we find something very important. Again, we see the great contrast between Christ and the way He is, the way He was when He was in the flesh, and the way those 'religious' leaders were then at that point, and the way 'religious' leaders are today. Let's remember a great and profound spiritual lesson: ***you cannot accomplish spiritual things by physical means!*** You never can. That's why all this fence-building, that's why all this restricting, that's why all these things to corral and hold down do not work; it's all artificial.

John 8:23: "And He said to them, 'You are from beneath; I am from above... [He's saying exactly what John was saying.] ...You are of this world; I am not of this world.'" We cannot be of the world either, brethren, in the same way that the world is with the world. It's an impossibility! You can't be double-minded.

Verse 24: "That is why I said to you that you shall die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I AM..." They knew what 'I AM' means. They knew that that went back to Exo. 3 where Moses said, 'Who shall I say has sent me?' And He said, 'Tell them I AM THAT I AM has sent you.' So, when He said that, *they knew*.

If you don't believe that "...you shall die in your sins." Then they said to Him, 'Who are You?'.... [because they knew what 'I AM' meant] ...And Jesus said to them, 'The one that I said to you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge concerning you; but He Who sent

Me is true, and what I have heard from Him..." (vs 24-26).

Why did Christ only speak the things that He heard of the Father? *Because He loved the Father, and the Father loved Him!* The only way that God's plan is really going to come to its fullness is for all of us to grow in this love and to love God, and to fulfill it with the same kind of love that God the Father and Jesus Christ had for each other.

Of course, that can only come from God. You can't work that up within yourself; you don't have it. It has to be the gift of God. That's why the fruit of the Spirit, as Paul says, is first love, and then joy and peace and all the rest of them.

"...these things I speak to the world.' *But* they did not know that He was speaking to them of the Father. Then Jesus said to them, 'When you have lifted up the Son of man... [They knew that was crucifixion. He was telling them ahead of time, 'When you have crucified Me.'] ...then you yourselves shall know that I AM..." (vs 26-28). All the events that took place at the Passover proved that He was God in the flesh, the Son of God the Father.

"...and *that* I do nothing of Myself. But as the Father taught Me, these things I speak" (v 28). I think that all teachers better read that and understand that you speak the things of God. To teach the brethren of God is a great responsibility which God the Father has given. So we had better be about preaching and teaching the words of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Those are the only words of love that are going to up-build the brethren. When we do that the brethren will be built up, and God will build us up, and we will build up the brethren, and all of us together will be built up in Christ. That's how God wants it, speaking the words of the Father.

Verse 29: "And He Who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone because **I always do the things that please Him.**" This becomes a very important thing for us to understand concerning the love of God.

Let's look at it this way: if you ***truly*** love someone with all of your fiber, being and passion, are you not going to do everything that you can to please that person? *Yes you will!* What did God the Father say when they were on the Mount of Transfiguration and the cloud came, and they saw Jesus transfigured and glorified, with Moses on one hand and Elijah on the other hand? What was it that the voice said? *He said, 'This is My Son, the Beloved, in Whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him.'* So likewise, brethren, if we have the love of God we're going to do the things that are well-pleasing to Him, without a doubt. There can be no doubt.

It doesn't matter what your circumstances are around you, because love is not bounded by circumstances. Love is not restricted by circumstances. Love is spiritual and comes from the Father to you and back to the Father, from Christ to you, and back to Christ, in an ongoing relationship.

Again, we're going to see this love that the Father had for Jesus Christ, and the love that Christ had for the Father. That's another reason why Christ did not sin, even though He had the capacity to sin, because *He did it through love*. That's a great key for us to understand in overcoming. Your overcoming is going to be a whole lot lighter load if you're loving God, because then you're going to understand, and He will lift these things from you.

After they came after Jesus to accuse Him of doing the things on the Sabbath of healing this man and telling the man to 'take up your bed roll and walk,' and they said, 'He broke the Sabbath.' No such thing. Anyone who turns here and says, 'This shows that Jesus broke the Sabbath; therefore, the Sabbath is no longer binding,' is completely screwy in the head and does not understand the Truth of the Scriptures, and that is a satanic, carnal-minded argument against the Sabbath.

John 5:16: "And for this cause, the Jews persecuted Jesus and sought to kill Him... [If you seek to kill someone, you don't have the love of God—do you? Just like Jesus said, 'I know you. You don't have the love of God in your heart.'] ...because He had done these things on a Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, 'My Father is working until now, and I work'" (vs 16-17).

What do we do on the Sabbath? *We do spiritual work!* We do those things which uplift, teach, help, and release from bondage, from sin. That's why Christ came in the first place, and they didn't understand it.

Verse 18: "So then, on account of this *saying*, the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, not only because He had loosed the Sabbath..." No, He didn't break the Sabbath. This word in the Greek comes from the word 'luo'—which means *to loose*. He loosed the Sabbath from their silly, restrictive requirements. He didn't destroy the Sabbath. He didn't break the Sabbath because He didn't sin; and Jesus would command no man to sin.

Not only did they think He had broken the Sabbath "...but also *because* He had called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God. Therefore, Jesus answered and said to them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, the Son has no power to do anything of Himself...' (vs 18-19). That means He didn't originate out anything from within His own human nature, which He had.

"...but only what He sees the Father do. For whatever He does, these things the Son also does in the same manner.... [Why did He have this kind of behavior? Why could He say that that's what He did?] ...For the Father loves the Son... [We've seen that the Son is loving the Father, and the Father is loving the Son. That's why They had this relationship.] ...and shows Him everything that He Himself is doing. And He will show Him greater works than these, so that you may be filled with wonder" (vs 19-20).

This was a tremendous thing, this love that God the Father and Jesus Christ had for each other. Therefore, even though Christ came to the world and He was utterly alone—which He truly was when you understand it, because even the disciples didn't believe on Him, and some didn't even believe after the resurrection—that's how He was able to function alone, because He loved the Father, and He knew the Father loved Him. With the fullness of the Spirit of God *in* Him it was continuously an ongoing thing between Them.

Now let's go to Luke 4, and let's see how love, in action with Christ, worked even under the temptation of Satan the devil—because this is so important. How do you react when things come upon you? If you're loving God you're going to be able to, but I'm going to tell you something that's very true:

- if you are not praying to God and if you are not studying His Word
- if you are not drinking in of His Holy Spirit
- if you're not going to the Father and Jesus Christ and asking Them to give you Their love that you may love back to Them
- that you may also love the brethren

you're going to be very penurious indeed in your love. You may even end up just like the Pharisees, as Jesus said, 'I know you, that you don't have the love of God in you.' I have met those in the Church of God that way. I have met those ministers and those brethren who are that way. If you truly have the love of God in you, here's how you're going to act in circumstances when tribulation and trial come upon you.

Luke 4:1: "And Jesus, filled with *the* Holy Spirit..." If He's full of the Holy Spirit, He's full of the power of God, He's full of the love of God, He's full the faith of God, He has the determination of God—does He not? *Yes!*

"...and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" (v 1). In the wilderness, that's where, if you recall, on the day of Atonement *Azazel* is sent—correct? He represents Satan the devil. That's why

it's no strange thing that He went out in the desert to meet Satan the devil.

Verse 2: “*For* forty days to be tempted by the devil... [*Every day, tempted!*] ...And He ate nothing in those days...” Apparently He didn't drink anything either, because if He was going to be greater than Moses, Moses stood before God and received the Law and the statutes and the judgments, and he didn't eat or he didn't drink. I don't believe that Jesus did.

There was a time when I thought maybe Jesus even drank some water. But I would have to say, knowing the Scriptures a little more than I did back then, I would have to conclude that Jesus didn't drink any water.

“...and after they had come to an end, He hungered... [here's part of the trial that He went through during the 40 days] ...Then the devil said to Him, ‘If You... [this is a challenge to God] ...are *the* Son of God, command that this stone become bread.’ But Jesus answered him, saying, ‘It is written...’” (vs 2-4).

We're going to see all the way through it's very profound. Even ***Jesus lived by the words which He inspired*** in the Old Testament, as well as living by the words and the teachings that God the Father was giving Him for the New Covenant. So, we have both of them together—don't we?

“...‘It is written... [going right to the Scriptures of God. If you love God you're going to go to the Scriptures to know and find out what you need to do—correct? *Yes!*] ...‘Man... [because Christ was in the flesh, so He's talking of those who are in the flesh] ...shall not live by bread alone... [not by food alone] ...but by every Word of God’” (v 4)—and Matthew adds: ‘that proceeds out of the mouth of God.’ Because what you have here in the Scriptures is the very words that came out of the mouth of God, which are written down for us, which Jesus said, ‘These are spirit, and these are life.’

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Jesus had this love for God the Father and the Father loving Him, He was able to overcome the intense temptations that Satan the devil brought against Jesus Christ. That's the same way with us, brethren. We are going to come to some of the most intense times that this world has ever seen. And the only way we're going to be able to survive and go through them and be faithful to God is to love Him.

Verse 5: “Then the devil led Him up into a high mountain *and* showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘I will give You all this authority, and

the glory of them *all*; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I desire’” (vs 5-6).

There's always a catch. Whenever you do the devil's bidding you must worship him. Just remember that is what has happened with the apostasy within the Churches of God. How many years ago did we say when you start compromising with the devil just a little bit he's going to come back and you're going to compromise a little bit more. He is not going to be through with you until you worship him and deny God the Father and Jesus Christ.

Verse 7: “‘Therefore, if You will worship me in *my* presence... [Just a simple little thing! Save all the pain. But it's not a simple little thing. It's life or death—eternal life or eternal death.] ...all things shall be Yours.’ But Jesus answered *and* said to him, ‘Get behind Me, Satan; for it is written, “You... [that is as a human being] ...shall worship *the* Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.’” (vs 7-8). Now keep this in mind. Even the Apostle Paul said, ‘You cannot serve God and your belly.’ Didn't He say that? *Yes!*

Verse 9: “Then he led Him to Jerusalem and set Him upon the edge of the temple, and said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, cast Yourself down from here; For it is written... [so even Satan can come back with Scripture] ...‘He shall give His angels charge concerning You to keep You’” (vs 9-10). This is something that is true. There can be people come in and ministers come in and quote Scripture correctly but misapply it because they are applying it to circumstances which do not apply. Yes, the angels will keep you, but not if you deliberately leap because you're tempting God.

Verse 11: “‘...And in *their* hands they shall bear You up, lest You strike Your foot against a stone.’” But Jesus answered *and* said to him, ‘It is *clearly* stated, “You shall not tempt *the* Lord your God.’” Now when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from Him for a time” (vs 11-13). Left Him alone for a little while.

Now let's look and see that Jesus Christ requires the same thing of us. Jesus requires the same response from us to Him and God the Father in relationship to everything else that there is in this world: to Satan the devil, to the principalities, to the powers that operate in high places, the wickedness of this world, in relationship to our own flesh and blood.

Luke 14:26: “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father, and mother...” This means to love God far more in comparison to, but your love for God is so great, that if your mother and father come to you and say, ‘If you love me you will do

this' and if this that they are asking is sin to do you will have to say, 'I can't do it.' And they say, 'If you don't do it, you don't love me.' So be it. That's the way it has to be.

"...and wife, and children, and brothers and sisters, and, in addition, his own life also... [that you're not going to give in to temptation and sin just to save your own skin] ...he cannot be My disciple.... [there's no power to make you His disciple] ...And whoever does not carry his cross... [You're going to have a cross to bear, I'm going to have a cross to bear, whatever it may be. It can be family. It can be health. It can be other people. It can be a job. It can be whatever the cross is you have to bear] ...and come after Me..." (vs 26-27).

Christ is not going to keep coming after you. The sheep follow the shepherd. Yes, the shepherd will go after the one that is lost. But you're not going to be lost if you're always following the Shepherd—right? If you're coming after Christ then you will make it. You have to bear your cross and come after Him.

If not, you "...cannot be My disciple; For which one of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has *sufficient* for its completion" (vs 27-28). Then He gives examples concerning that, the building of a house, the going to war.

Verse 33: "In the same way also... [exactly in the same manner] ...each one of you who does not forsake all that he possesses cannot be My disciple." In other words, He's saying, 'If you want salvation there is **nothing** in this world"—be it a person, be it a thing, be it a spirit, be it an idea, whatever. If you are loving God, these things you will do just as Jesus Christ did. That's why love is so powerful. That's why it's so important. That's what Jesus is teaching here through all of this.

Now we're going to see just a little bit different rendition of the same thing that He talked about, only this time couched in just a little bit different terms.

Matthew 10:37: "The one who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me..." Why? *Because Christ came in loving this world with the love of the Father*, and when He was here He was loving the Father and the Father was loving Him, and He bore in His flesh our sins, and He was the perfect sacrifice, and so you have to love Him **more** than anything else. Here's something else you need to consider: if you love father or mother more than Christ you're loving the created more than the Creator—is that not true? *Yes it is!*

"...And the one who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And the one who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. The one who has found his life shall lose it... [This is happening to one of the largest Churches of God we know of. And it's also happening to another Church of God because the leader did not love God. He loved his own carnal ways.] ...The one who has found his life... [in this world] ...shall lose it; and the one who has lost his life for My sake shall find it" (vs 37-39). That's what you have to do. You have to lose your life in love for God the Father and Jesus Christ and you will find life; yes, and you will find eternal life.

How important is this love of God back toward Jesus Christ in relationship to salvation? *It is the whole key important thing of salvation!* Notice what Paul says here:

1-Corinthians 16:22 "If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ... [Think on this, because this is a pretty strong saying] ...let him be accursed."—'anathema maran-atha'—that is, *double-cursed*. How important is the love of God? You can't receive salvation without it. That's how important it is.

Now let's come back to Matthew 5 and let's see what love is also going to motivate you to do. In Matthew 5, 6, and 7 we have the Sermon on the Mount where He's giving all of the beatitudes, all the blessings that come. These beatitudes only can come about because you love God. These are some of the experiences that you are going to go through if you're loving God.

Matthew 5:3: "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Why? *Because you love God!*

Verse 4: "Blessed *are* they who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Why? *Because you love God*, and you mourn and sigh and cry for all the sins and terrible things in the world around about you.

Verse 5: "Blessed *are* the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Why are they meek? *Because you love God!* When you love God you understand that ***you have nothing you didn't receive!*** You don't have some great big image to portray; you don't have something you have to live up to. If you love God with all your heart, mind, soul and being, that's what you have to live up to. God will bless you.

Verse 6: "Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Do you not know that if you truly love God the Father and Jesus Christ, what are you going to be doing? *Hungering and thirsting after righteousness—Their righteousness!*



You're going to hunger and thirst to know the Word of God; to know even the great and the deep and marvelous things of God. And Jesus said, 'you shall be filled.' Tremendous promise—isn't it? So it's not by might, it's not by power, but *it's by the love of God* through the Spirit of God. It's not because you're smart; it's not because you're intellectual; it's not because you've been educated to know this, that and the other thing. You have to totally lose your life in Christ in order to love Him. Then He will fill you with righteousness.

Verse 7: "Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall find mercy." if you love God and know the mercy you receive, then you will be merciful to others.

Verse 8: "Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for they shall see God." You could have a pure heart if you love God. All of these beatitudes are based upon the love of God. ***Every single one of them.***

Verse 9-10: "Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called *the* sons of God. Blessed *are* those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Why? *Because the love of God resides upon you if you are persecuted for true loving God and true righteousness.*

Verse 11: "Blessed are you when they shall reproach you, and shall persecute *you*, and shall falsely say every wicked thing against you, for My sake." Why? *Because you're loving God!*

Verse 12: "Rejoice and be filled with joy, for great *is* your reward in heaven: for sin this same manner they persecuted the prophets who *were* before you." Then He goes and shows that the Law was not done away; He came to fulfill and add and bring to.

Then He gives us something that is very, ***very difficult to do.*** He gives us the hardest challenge of love that there is.

Verse 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'" That's the way too many people's love is. They live over here in this town and they hate them over here in this town. They live up on top of this mountain, the Hatfield's, and they have the McCoy's over here, and they hate and kill each other. Oh, they love each other, but they hate and kill each other.

Now Jesus is saying 'This kind of love is no longer going to stand.' Because Christ, Who died for the world because He loved the world, and He's going to eventually bring salvation to them because He loves them, how can you have it in your heart that you truly hate someone? You can hate their deeds if they are truly evil. Get away from them.

Don't be around them. Obviously, do not do that. You can love them from a distance, by being away from them and not getting into them. But if the situation is this, Paul said, 'If your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink. For in doing that you're going to be heaping coals of fire upon him.' So, if it comes right down to it, if your enemy is totally down and out, then love him in that manner.

But Jesus said, v 44: "But I say to you, love your enemies..." This is tough. There are enemies within the Church—those that should not be enemies. Part of the problem we're up against in trying to sort everything out that we've been through with all the Churches of God is how do we bring brethren back together and let their wounds be healed when they maybe at one time were enemies but now God has called them to be brethren again?

You need to think on how you can start resolving those things. You don't resolve them by shooting your brother dead. You don't resolve them by continuing to have hatred in your heart toward them. Especially if God says this:

Verse 44: "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you..." Jesus Christ lived by this—did He not? *Yes, He did!* You go back and see the whole history of His arrest and crucifixion, right down to the very last words, 'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.' If those were not His enemies, I do not know what enemies are.

"...and pray for those who despitefully use you and persecute you." (v 44). How can you do that? *You pray and ask God to give you grace and favor in their eyes. You pray and ask God to put the right thoughts into their mind!*

You can't correct them. You can't go tell them what to do because you have no control over them. But God does—does He not? ***So you pray for them!*** You ask God to change *their* mind if it's possible. This is especially true in a marriage situation. This is especially true in a brother-to-brother situation within the Church. We're bringing brethren together who have left at different times because of different reasons, and maybe went to this Church of God for a while and found that that really wasn't right, and went to another Church of God for a while and found that that wasn't right. In both of these Churches of God they hated each other, and God isn't going to have that either. So, if that's the case, drop all of this falseness and stupidity and really love one another as Christ wants you to.

Verse 45: "So that you yourselves may be *the* children of your Father Who *is* in heaven..." That's profound—isn't it? You want to be the

children of God? You want to be the children of the Father? *That's what He says to do then!*

“...for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *on the* good, and sends rain on *the* just and *on the* unjust. For **if you love those who love you...**” (vs 45-46). That's so easy to do. You just get your comfortable little niche and clique of friends and you love each other, and you leave out those who are neglected, and you leave out those that you don't love in the same way, and you leave out the widows and you leave out those that don't fit into your clique.

Brethren, did that not happen in the Churches of God? *Yes, it did!* Can we not put all of that aside now? Can we not let the love of God come into us, let it flow into us, let Christ be in us so that we can do that and be the children of God? If you love only those that love you, what have you done that's extraordinary? *Nothing!* Too much of the hospitality that people have is a pseudo-hospitality, to where they love people only on their terms. If you don't come to their terms, they hate you.

“...what reward do you have? Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing*? And if you salute your brethren only, what have you done *that is* extraordinary? Do not the tax collectors practice the same *thing*? [Yes!] Therefore, you shall be **perfect...**” (vs 46-48).

- perfect in love
- perfect in faith
- perfect in hope
- perfect with the Spirit of God in you

And if you're living under the grace of God, yes, that perfection will be imputed to you. Sure will! “...even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect” (v 48). That's the highest standard we could ever want—isn't it?

Let's understand something else that Jesus said in Matthew 6:22, a very important thing we need to understand: “The light of the body is the eye.... [Profound, basic statement. If you have the love of God in you, the light of life in you.] ...Therefore, if your eye be sound...”

- single in purpose
- single in hope
- single in love
- single toward Jesus Christ and God the Father

“...your whole body shall be *full of* light. But if your eye be evil...” (vs 22-23). I've seen people who have evil eyes; yes, I have. Some of the most deceitful eyes in men I have ever seen are now leaders of Churches of God. May that come to an end, please.

“...your whole body shall be *full of* darkness. Therefore, if the light that *is* in you be darkness, **how great is that darkness!**.... [There's no hope of recovery from that.] (Here's an impossible thing you cannot do): ...**No one is able to serve two masters...** [You cannot serve God and serve the world.] ...for either he will hate the one and love the other...” (vs 23-24).

If you're rejecting God the Father and Jesus Christ and going back into the world, guess who you are going to end up hating?

- You're going to end up hating God.
- You're going to end up accusing God.
- You're going to end up loving the world and saying of the world, ‘My, what lovely, wonderful things you have in Christmas, and in Easter, and all of these things.’
- You're going to end up hating God so much that you're even going to say that the commandments have no effect today.
- *That's hating God!*

So you can't split your mind. It won't work. “...for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to *the* one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (v 24).

- You cannot serve God and the world!
- You cannot serve God and money!
- ***You're to serve God with all your heart, mind, soul and being with the love of God in you!***

Now let's come to Luke 7, and let's see that:

- love takes action
- love requires repentance
- love brings about an attitude that is the opposite of self-exultation.

You can read about some of the other things in the chapter leading up to this Luke 7:36: “Now, one of the Pharisees invited Him to eat with him.... [apparently Jesus was invited out to eat quite a bit] ...And after going into the Pharisee's house, He sat down *at the table*. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner...” (vs 36-37). Those who are truly, truly sinners and live with their ugliness and their sin and they're convicted in heart, they know they're sinners. They're not trying to fool anyone.

Look what she did: “...when she knew that He was sitting in the Pharisee's house, took an alabaster flask of ointment; And she stood weeping behind Him, *and knelt* at His feet, *and* began to wash His feet with *her* tears and to wipe *them* with the hairs of her head; and she was ardently kissing His feet and anointing *them* with the ointment” (vs 37-38). Can you imagine the spectacle that this was

to all these hooty-snooty Pharisees sitting around? Woo-oooh my, this was bad news!

Verse 39: “But when he saw *this*, the Pharisee who had invited Him spoke within himself, saying...” You always do that—don’t you? You always judge someone in your heart. When you don’t have the love of God in you, you always judge someone and impute motives—don’t you? *Yes, you do!* Do you do that to people? *You better have the love of God and get that out of you!* You don’t know their heart. The most unloving thing you can ever do and say is this, that you know exactly what someone else is thinking. You don’t know what they’re thinking! Are you a mind-reader? *No!* You can guess. Many times wives guess pretty close because they’ve lived with their husbands a long time. But still, they cause no end of grief by saying, ‘I know.’ *You can’t know!* You don’t know what’s in a person’s heart, mind and soul.

Here’s what the Pharisee is saying: “...‘This man, if He were a prophet... [so He’s not] ...would have known who and what the woman *is* who is touching Him because she is a sinner.’.... [He ought to know better] ...Then Jesus answered *and* said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’.... [in his sanctimonious pretending] ...And he said, ‘Teacher, say *on*.’ ‘There were two debtors of a certain creditor; one owed five hundred silver coins, and the other fifty. But when they did not have *anything with which* to pay him, he forgave *them* both. Tell *Me* then, which of them will love him most?’ And Simon answered *and* said, ‘I suppose *the one* whom he forgave the most.’ And He said to him, ‘You have judged rightly’” (vs 39-43) He did this to trap him, to convict him out of his own hypocritical mouth.

Verse 44: “And after turning to the woman, He said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I came into your house, and you did not provide *any* water to wash My feet; but she has washed My feet with *her* tears and wiped *them* with the hairs of her head. You did not give Me a kiss; but she, from the *time* I came in, has not ceased to ardently kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil; but she has anointed My feet with ointment. For this cause, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven because she loved much....’” (v 44-47).

- love requires repentance
- love requires action
- love requires a whole-hearted devotion like this

When you truly come to understand the love of God, this is how you’re going to feel toward God the Father and Jesus Christ.

“...But to whom little is forgiven, he loves

little.” (v 47). Oh, have we not seen this in action? All the sanctimonious pretenders and hypocrites, they love little, but

- they want the rank
- they want the authority
- they want the office
- they want the praise
- *But they don’t love much!*

Verse 48: “And He said to her, ‘Your sins have been forgiven.’ Then those who were sitting with *Him* began to say within themselves, ‘Who is this, Who even forgives sins?’ But He said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you. Go in peace’” (48-50). Now may it be that way with us, brethren. Let our faith and let our love save us.

- may we come in peace
- may we go in peace
- may we put aside all of this that goes against the love of God

Now let’s see something else. Let’s see how Jesus told the Pharisees—this is quite profound—after they went through the whole argument, John 8:42: “Therefore, Jesus said to them, ‘If God were your Father, you would have loved Me... [If you love the Father and He is your God, you’re going to love Jesus Christ.] ...because I proceeded forth and came from God. For I have not come of Myself, but He sent Me.’” Why didn’t they love Him? *Because their god was Satan the devil!*

We’re going to cover three places here which are very important for us to understand, very important for us to realize. There are three versions of this same thing, so I want to cover them all because this is important.

Luke 10:25 “Now, a certain doctor of the law suddenly stood up... [This is one who knew the Law. Of course, lawyers are going to ask picky questions—right?] ...tempting Him and saying, ‘Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’ And He said to him, ‘What is written in the law? How do you read *it*?’.... [many times you have to answer a question with a question] ...Then he answered *and* said... [the lawyer answered]: ...‘You shall love *the* Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself’” (vs 25-27).

This is the whole basis, brethren, of our entire relationship with God. As we have covered before, love is the greatest. There is faith, there is hope, there is love, but *love is the greatest*. Paul says the way of love is the most excellent way. Some people want to speak in tongues. Some people want to be important. Some people want to be teachers.

Some want to be recognized. But if you don't have the love of God none of it is going to work, and here's how you've got to love God: with all your heart—a total commitment—with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind. You don't reserve a little corner of your mind over here for yourself. It all belongs to God.

Verse 28: “And He said to him, ‘You have answered correctly. Do this, and you shall live.’.... [he's willing to justify himself, because a lawyer always wants to bring a picky question] ...But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” (vs 28-29).

So then, we have the parable of the man who was robbed and left by the wayside. A Levite came by and looked at him and said, ‘Oh, I better not get involved with this.’ A priest came by and passed clear to the other side: ‘I'm on my way to do righteous, important work at the Temple, and I better not be defiled with blood.’ Here comes a Samaritan—if there was any hated person of the Jews, it's the Samaritan—came over, picked up the man, took care of his wounds, put him at the inn, put wine and olive oil in his wounds and told the master of the inn, ‘you take care of him, make sure he's well, and on my way back I'll pay for it when I come.’ So, your neighbor is whoever is your neighbor. That's the whole story of it.

Here's another different version. Maybe a little bit different time, a different time setting. But it was always one of the scribes or Pharisees who was doing it. They wanted Him to say that something else was the primary commandment.

Mark 12:28 “And one of the scribes who had come up to Him, after hearing them reasoning together and perceiving that He answered them well, asked Him, ‘Which is *the* first commandment of all?’.... [The ‘first’ here in the Greek is ‘protos’—or the *primary commandment*; the *most important commandment* of all.] ...Then Jesus answered him... [Here Jesus is giving the answer instead of having the scribe give the answer]: ...‘*The* first of all the commandments is, “Hear, O Israel. Our one God is *the* Lord, *the* Lord.... [that means one in essence, not in number] ...And you shall love *the* Lord your God **with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.**”....’” (vs 28-30).

This is the foundation in the Gospel that we need to have so when we get into the Epistles of Paul, when we get into the General Epistles, then we will be able to build on that. This is the beginning, foundational thing that we need to have: *loving God this way*. This is what we *always* need to keep in mind. If you do this, are you going to serve

yourself? *No!* You're going to take care of yourself because you love your neighbor as yourself, that is true.

- Are you going to have your mind focused on yourself?
- Are you going to have your own little pity-parties all the time for all the silly little things that you do?

or

- Other people have done to you?
- Are you going to be mad and angry and hold your anger forever?

or

- Are you going to love God?

Let that be the whole thrust of every thought that you have.

“...This *is the* first commandment. And *the* second *is* like this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.’ Then the scribe said to Him, ‘Right, Master. You have spoken according to Truth... [Well, isn't that profound, coming from a scribe?] ...that God is one, and there is not another besides Him; and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love *one's* neighbor as oneself, is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.’ And Jesus, seeing that he answered with understanding, said to him, ‘You are not far from the Kingdom of God’” (vs 30-34).

Brethren, let's ask ourselves: How close or how far are we from the Kingdom of God because we're not doing this? *This is what Jesus said we need to do to inherit eternal life*—correct? When it says ‘more than all burnt offerings,’ that means *any physical thing that can be done!* Take all the animals and all the offerings that were done under the Old Testament, they do not count for one minute of loving God. You take all the dos and don'ts that men put down to judge you and corral you and bring you into a hypocritical, pseudo-Christianity; that is a sacrifice of a physical thing. You are to love God with all your heart, mind, soul and being. That's how it has to be.

Now let's see the version in Matthew, because here again He adds a little bit of something in addition to what we've already heard. Matthew 22:34: “But after the Pharisees heard that He had silenced the Sadducees, they came together *before Him*.... [‘Now how are we gonna get this guy? Well, let's see if we can trip Him up on a question here.’] ...And one of them, a doctor of the law, questioned Him, tempting Him, and saying, ‘Master, which commandment *is the great* commandment in the Law?’” (vs 34-36)—‘*megalos*’ in this case; not

‘protos’ but ‘megalos’—not just the *primary*, but the *great, over-arching commandment* in the law.

Verse 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.’.... [complete whole-heartedness to God] ...This is the first and great commandment.... [this is ‘protos’ and ‘megalos’] ...And *the second one is* like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’.... [Lest there be any doubt, that if you’re going to love God you do away with the commandments of God. **Never, never happen!** Notice what Jesus said]: ...**On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets**” (vs 37-40).

So, you have loving God and your neighbor, and then on this, from this, hanging down, proceeding from; loving God and loving your neighbor is the great foundation. The rest of it proceeds from you cannot have Law and Prophets and expect to come to love. **You must have love**, and *then you come to the Law and the Prophets*. Jesus said ‘If you love Me, keep My commandments.’ He didn’t say, ‘Keep My commandments, and therefore, you will have love.’ **NO!** He said, ‘If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.’ That’s very important for us to realize, brethren.

When we come to the love of God in the Gospels, what we find here is this great foundation of the primary and great commandment of loving God, the ‘protos’ and the ‘megalos’—***the great commandment***; and on that then everything else is built. On that everything else hangs from.

Now next time we will begin to understand more concerning John 3:16, because here is one of the most profound things that has ever been written in the Scriptures. So profound that even those in the world, who profess Christianity, have an inkling of an understanding of this.

John 3:16: “For God so loved the world...” There are some who are saying that God hates the world. ***God hates sin!*** God does hate the things that are wicked. He even hates wicked people that is true. But who blinded them? ***God did!*** Why did He blind them? ***So that He can have mercy! So that He can call them in the second resurrection!***

This does not just apply to the Church only. God does not just love the Church only. He loves the Church ***speciallly***, but not *only*. He still loves the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He still loves the world because He created every man in the image of God—did He not? And He’s going to bring them salvation in His time and in His way. When we read this Scripture, let’s think *great*. Or, as the Greek is, ‘megalos’—*broad, huge; the whole plan of God*.

Verse 16: “For God so **loved** the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, so that everyone who believes in Him...” Your belief has to come *into*, as the Greek is. You are believing, coming out from your being *into the being of Christ*. His Spirit is coming back into you, and this is an ongoing, two-way thing, all the time. Just like Paul said,

- from faith unto faith
- from the love of God to you
- the love of you back toward God
- the faith of God to you
- the faith of God back to Him

all working together, believing into Him.

“...may not perish, but may have everlasting life” (v 3). That’s what God wants to give us. That’s why the love of God is so profound. Everything in the world is going to disappear. Everything in the world God is going to destroy and remake new. That’s why things do not count. You have to love God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul and all your being.

Then v 17 applies: “For God sent not His Son into the world that He might judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.”

Brethren, ***Christ loves you!*** The ***Father loves you!*** We need ***to love each other!*** Let’s take all of these things and put them together and ***build the love of God***, because that is the most important and the greatest. As Jesus said, ***it is the first and the great commandment***.

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred. R. Coulter (except where noted)

#### Scripture References

- 1) Matthew 24:12
- 2) Luke 11:37-54
- 3) Luke 12:1-3
- 4) John 5:36-47
- 5) John 3:30-34, 36, 35
- 6) John 10:14-17
- 7) John 8:23-29
- 8) John 5:16-20
- 9) Luke 4:1-13
- 10) Luke 14:26-28, 33
- 11) Matthew 10:37-39
- 12) 1 Corinthians 16:22
- 13) Matthew 5:3-12, 43-48
- 14) Matthew 6:22-24
- 15) Luke 7:36-50
- 16) John 8:42
- 17) Luke 10:25-29
- 18) Mark 12:28-34
- 19) Matthew 22:34-40
- 20) John 3:16-17

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Matthew 23
- Exodus 3

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