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# C. S. Lewis On Christian Doctrine and the Book of Mormon

By C. G. Van Gorden

C. S. Lewis,<sup>1</sup> the celebrated author of *Mere Christianity*, *The Problem of Pain*, the *Chronicles of Narnia*, and a host of Christian apologetic books, is one of the best selling authors of our era. His largest reading audience in Utah is among Latter-day Saints, which is strange, since he wholeheartedly embraced the very creeds that Joseph Smith labeled apostate.

C. S. Lewis was a conservative, courageous Anglican Christian. Concerning his personal faith, he wrote, "I was baptized in the Church of Ireland (same as Anglican)."<sup>2</sup> Like Mr. Lewis, I, too, was baptized in the Anglican Church.

Later, he journeyed through agnosticism, during which time he abandoned his faith. At age 32 he rebounded with such force that he faithfully defended the Bible and the historic creeds of Christianity until his death. Through Lewis and others, I have been taught to defend the Bible and the historic Church with what Lewis and my teachers called *real truth*. Real truth in a real world can make a difference.

While living in Utah, I found Lewis's writings misquoted in support of things he opposed and, in fact, abhorred, which is not *real* or *true* to his conviction embodied in the Bible, the creeds, and Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican Church. Herein I argue that a handful Lewis's quotations have been commandeered by Mormon writers whose agenda is to sanitize Joseph Smith's "restored" doctrines through Lewis's popularity. Filtering Smith through Lewis cannot be done without violating Lewis's intent, context, and consistency.

Joseph Smith's 1820 First Vision condemned all Christian Churches as apostate with abominable creeds.<sup>3</sup> Smith believed it was his job to "restore" Christianity. C. S. Lewis's Church and the creeds to which he subscribed are included in Smith's apostasy declaration. It is inconsistent for Mormon writers to say that they have the only true church and then use



a perceived "apostate" to validate their "restored" doctrines. My contention is that they are exploiting Lewis's works to propagandize objectionable doctrines and proselytize unaware Christians for their fold.

C. S. Lewis upheld the shared fundamental dogmas of Christianity while rejecting the contrary: "What is most certain," he wrote, "is the vast mass of doctrine which I find agreed on by Scripture, the Fathers, the Middle Ages, modern R. C.'s, modern Protestants. That is true 'catholic' doctrine. Mere 'modernism' I reject at once."<sup>4</sup> He admits that his position draws fire, "I have been suspected of being what is called a Fundamentalist."<sup>5</sup> Others labeled him as liberal, but one thing certain is that he was never branded as a "Mormon." In post-mortem epigrams it is trendy among Latter-day Saints to call him a "crypto-Mormon" or an "honorary Mormon."<sup>6</sup> Was he?

Lewis mastered fiction, non-fiction, prose, and poetry. His imagery brought forth the truth behind the image. While we can't interview Mr. Lewis today, still his logical and consistent thoughts provide timeless answers to today's questions from his 20th-century pen. In similar imagery, my question and answer motif on Lewis and Mormonism provide his answers from addressing other issues. If, for example, the living Lewis answered a question about whether God the Father has a physical body, to which he said "no," then it would make no difference if the questioner was a Latter-day Saint. Would Lewis

suddenly say yes? I think the reader will see that Lewis was faithful to historic Christianity and made revealing statements that prevent his dry-baptism into Mormonism.

From the outset, Lewis's most condemning statement on Mormonism was his judgment that the Book of Mormon was equal to other human work that relied upon the source text of the King James Version Bible. Let's ask Lewis some questions in an interview format.

Q: Mormon writers have used your books in support of their faith. For example, Brigham Young University scholar Louis Midgley, wrote, "The Book of Mormon, in the language already quoted from C. S. Lewis, 'is either a fact, or a legend, or a lie.'"<sup>8</sup> Is the Book of Mormon fiction that relies upon the "influence" of the Bible, say, along the lines of Martin F. Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*?

Lewis: "You will perhaps remember that I have defined Influence, in this sense, as that which prompts a man to write in a certain way... Very few English writers have undergone an influence of that sort from any book of the Bible. Tupper *Proverbial Philosophy* and the Book of Mormon are perhaps instances."<sup>9</sup>

Q: Fair enough. The Book of Mormon is as inspired as Tupper. Is it the apologist's duty to correct error?

Lewis: "In answer to this, you must first correct their error about fact."<sup>10</sup>

Q: Let's talk about God. Joseph Smith claimed that he met God the Father face to face in 1820. He taught that the Father is a physical resurrected man. Furthermore, Smith particularly condemned the Church of England's doctrine: "While the Church of England teaches in her articles of faith 'that there is but one living and true God everlasting, without body, parts, or passions, of infinite power, wisdom and goodness.' This view of God as an incorporeal, immaterial, bodiless, partless, passionless



## Are You The One Lost Sheep Who Jesus Is Seeking?

In the New Testament we find a parable by Jesus Christ about the one lost sheep. It goes like this.

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he loses one, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing. And when he arrives home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, 'Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.' I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner who repents more than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:5-7.)

**How do you know if Jesus is seeking after your soul?**

Often the Holy Spirit of God works in these ways:

- \* You will have an amazing love for Jesus, instead of a church, baptism, or special book.

- \* You will find yourself driven to read the Bible to find out more about God's love through Jesus Christ.

- \* You will find yourself desiring to be around joyful Christians who talk about Jesus in a personal way—they pray to Him, they serve Him, they worship Him, and they will want you to know Jesus in a personal way too.

If God is working in your life through these or similar ways, then you are probably being drawn by His Holy Spirit to know Him.

The seed of the Gospel has been placed in your life, but you need to become fertile soil for the Gospel seed to grow. We encourage you to get a Bible and begin reading the Gospel of John. Find a Christian friend or visit a Bible-centered Church and ask the Pastor about new life in Jesus Christ. Look in the yellow pages for Baptist, Evangelical, Foursquare, Assembly of God, Calvary Chapel, or similar places. Contact us and we will help.

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being is now and has been from the days of the great apostasy from God and Christ, in the second and third centuries, the doctrine of Deity generally accepted by apostate Christendom."<sup>11</sup> What do you say of this?

**Lewis:** "This talk of 'meeting' is no doubt, anthropomorphic; as if God and I could be face to face, like fellow creatures...But never, here or anywhere else, let us think that while anthropomorphic images are a concession to our weakness, the abstractions are the literal truth. Both are equally concessions; each singly misleading, and the two together mutually corrective."<sup>12</sup>

**Q:** Either the Father is a Being of flesh or He isn't? John 4:24 says "God is Spirit." How do we deal with opposing propositions?

**Lewis:** "I think we must attack wherever we meet it the nonsensical idea that mutually exclusive propositions about God can both be true."<sup>13</sup>

**Q:** But Joseph Smith claimed that he saw both God the Father and the Son. Are you saying this can't happen?

**Lewis:** "When they say that Christ is the 'Son' of 'the Father' they may have a picture of two human forms, the one looking rather older than the other. But we now know that the mere presence of these mental pictures does not, of itself, tell us anything about the reasonableness or absurdity of the thoughts they accompany. If absurd images meant absurd thought, then we should all be thinking nonsense all the time. And the Christians themselves make it clear that the images are not to be identified with the thing believed. They may picture the father as a human form, but they also maintain that He has no body. They may picture Him older than the Son, but they also maintain the one did not exist before the other, both having existed from all eternity."<sup>14</sup>

**Q:** Is it false, then, to say that the Father has a man-like body?

**Lewis:** "No doubt we are unspeakably different from Him; to the extent all man-like images are false."<sup>15</sup>

**Q:** Mormon literature uses passages like Acts 7, where Stephen saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God, which Mormons say implies two resurrected human beings. Is this passage in Acts metaphorical?

**Lewis:** "I allow, indeed I insist, that Christ cannot be at 'the right hand of God' except in a metaphorical sense. I allow and insist that the Eternal Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, can never be, nor have been, confined to any place at all: it is rather in Him that all places exist."<sup>16</sup>

**Q:** What if someone argues that some early Christians did not see this as metaphorical?

**Lewis:** "As far, then, as the adult Christian of modern times is concerned, the absurdity of images does not imply absurdity in the doctrines; but it may be asked whether the early Christian was in the same position. Perhaps he mistook the images for true ones, and really believed in the sky palace or the decorated chair... If such a man had then gone to Alexandria and had a

philosophical education he would have discovered that the father had no right hand and did not sit on a throne."<sup>17</sup>

**Q:** In contrast, then, to Mormon authorities like Brigham Young or Bruce R. McConkie, who said that God procreates spirit-children in heaven, if he is not a resurrected human or creature of any type, then does it seem possible that their concept of God is real?

**Lewis:** "Compare 'Our Father which art in Heaven' with 'The supreme being transcends space and time'. The first goes to pieces if you begin to apply the literal meaning to it. How can anything but a sexual animal really be a father? How can it be in the sky? The second falls into no such traps."<sup>18</sup>

**Q:** Colossians 1:15 and 1 Timothy 1:17 are two biblical examples that God is "invisible." How would you concisely state this?

**Lewis:** "God is pronounced 'Inexpressible, unthinkable, invisible to all created beings.'<sup>19</sup>

**Q:** God is a Trinity of Persons (Matthew 28:19). God is Spirit (John 4:24). As Second Person of the Trinity, was Jesus bodiless prior to his earthly birth?

**Lewis:** "The Second Person is not only bodiless but so unlike man that if self-revelation had been His sole purpose He would not have chosen to be incarnate in human form."<sup>20</sup>

**Q:** Is this because John 1:1-3 portrays the Son as the omnipresent, eternal Creator and Sustainer of life?

**Lewis:** "But already in the New Testament this 'Son' is identified with the Discourse or Reason or Word which was eternally 'with God' and yet also was God. He is the all-pervasive principle of concretion or cohesion whereby the universe holds together. All things, and specially Life, arose within Him, and within Him all things will reach their conclusion—the final statement of what they have been trying to express."<sup>21</sup>

**Q:** On one hand, doesn't this appear like God is localized, which may lead to a Spirit in human form?

**Lewis:** "The Christian, on the other hand, deliberately rules out such images by saying that God is totally present at every point of space and time, and locally present in none."<sup>22</sup>

**Q:** Plus, isn't the Father outside of a time and space continuum?

**Lewis:** "I firmly believe that God's life is non temporal. Time is a defect of reality since by its very nature any temporal being loses each moment of its life to get the next—the moments run through us as if we were sieves! God forbid that we should think God to be like that."<sup>23</sup>

**Q:** This leads us to Heaven, creation, and God's true nature. The Mormon Church teaches three spheres of Heaven or three Heavens. Do you believe in Heaven?

**Lewis:** "It may be convenient here to make a list. Heaven can mean (1) The unconditioned Divine Life beyond all worlds. (2) Blessed participation in that Life by a created spirit. (3) The whole Nature or system of conditions in which re-deemed human spirits, still remain-

ing human, can enjoy such participation fully and forever. This is the Heaven Christ goes to "prepare" for us. (4) The physical Heaven, the sky, the space in which Earth moves."<sup>24</sup>

**Q:** A teaching attributed to Joseph Smith states: "To the very beginner in 'Mormon' theology, it is a familiar fact that Joseph Smith taught that matter is eternal, and has not been nor can be created."<sup>25</sup> On creation, then, did God create from nothing, *ex nihilo*, or from preexisting matter?

**Lewis:** "I think we probably differ about the meaning of creation. I take it to mean 'to cause to be, without pre-existing material (= to cause both the form and matter of) something pre-conceived in the Cause's thought which, after creation, is other than the Cause.'<sup>26</sup>

**Q:** When you mention the Cause, according to your books you mean one Absolute Cause beyond which nothing can exist. I'm reminded that Joseph Smith said that the God the Father had a Father before him: "Hence if Jesus had a Father, can we not believe that He had a Father also?"<sup>27</sup>

**Lewis:** "My feeling is that even if there are a thousand orders of beneficent being above us, still, the universe is a cheat unless at the back of them all there is one God of Christianity."<sup>28</sup>

**Q:** We trust in One God. Doesn't Isaiah 43:10 point out that there is none before him and none after him?

**Lewis:** "We trust not because 'a God' exists, but because *this* God exists."<sup>29</sup>

**Q:** An official Mormon periodical once called their belief polytheistic: "Polytheism, as understood, by the Latter-day Saints, is basically a Christian doctrine."<sup>30</sup> They limit worship to a triad of three gods who are of the human species, as the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* states, "Gods and humans represent a single divine lineage, the same species of being, although they and he are at different stages of progress."<sup>31</sup> How do polytheistic groups account for the origin of these gods?

**Lewis:** "In polytheism the gods are usually the product of a universe already in existence."<sup>32</sup>

**Q:** So we come back to the LDS view of eternal matter: "Matter is co-existent with God."<sup>33</sup> Mormon writers shun "pagan" (as they call it) polytheism by redefining their three gods as a Tritheism (three gods) as compared to the Christian Trinity (one God in three Persons). For example, BYU professor Rodney Turner, along with Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, referenced the Mormon godhead as "tritheism."<sup>34</sup> Turner credits Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon: "The fact that tritheism was what Joseph Smith, its translator, taught, suggests that tritheism is what the Book of Mormon ('the most correct of any book on earth') teaches as well."<sup>35</sup> Doesn't this language confuse people about the real meaning of Trinity as opposed to Tritheism (three gods)?

**Lewis:** "If even adult and educated Christians in trying to think of the Blessed Trinity have to guard consistently against falling into the heresy of Tritheism, what can we expect of Children."<sup>36</sup> "In other words, the difference between

believing in God and in many gods is not one of arithmetic. As someone has said 'gods' is not really the plural of God; God has no plural."<sup>37</sup>

**Q:** So Turner, Jackson, and Millet's doctrine is heresy. The species and lineage of gods in Mormonism actually means that these gods were born in other spheres. A Mormon scripture commentary states, "Man was born of woman; Christ the Savior, was born of woman and God, the Father, was born of woman."<sup>38</sup> Do other groups teach that gods were born?

**Lewis:** "As we have seen, even in the creation myths, gods have beginnings. Most of them have fathers and mothers; often we know their birthplaces."<sup>39</sup>

**Q:** Not only that, but Mormon scripture replaces "God" in the Genesis account of creation with "gods." Their Book of Abraham, chapter 4, states, "At the beginning...the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth." Some thirty-two times the gods are portrayed as creators in Mormon scripture.

**Lewis:** "No philosophical theory which I have yet come across is a radical improvement on the words of Genesis, that 'In the beginning God made Heaven and Earth.'<sup>40</sup>

**Q:** People confuse the nature of the one God, but others confuse the number of persons. Do you address this?

**Lewis:** "We must remind ourselves that Christian theology does not believe God to be a person. It believes Him to be such that in Him a trinity of persons is consistent with a unity of Deity."<sup>41</sup> And, "He contains 'persons' (three of them) while remaining one God."<sup>42</sup> Again, "All three Persons of the Trinity are declared 'incomprehensible.'<sup>43</sup>

**Q:** Here, again, "incomprehensible" confronts us. Does this make our creeds sound unintelligible?

**Lewis:** By the way, I don't think 'incomprehensible' in the Creed or 'passing comprehension' mean what is usually thought. It doesn't mean, I am told, simply unintelligible, like a book in an unknown tongue. It means not thinkable-out, not capable of being fully summed-up or intellectually mastered."<sup>44</sup>

**Q:** God is "incomprehensible" as a Trinity of Persons and is absolutely one in Being. Is that correct?

**Lewis:** He is 'absolute being'—or rather the Absolute Being—in the sense that He alone exists in His own right."<sup>45</sup>

**Q:** In the matter of Christ's incarnation, are you teaching that the Absolute Being, the one true God, became incarnate?

**Lewis:** "The Christian is not claiming that simply 'God' was incarnate in Jesus. They are claiming that the one true God is He whom the Jews worshipped as Jehweh, and that it is He who has descended."<sup>46</sup>

**Q:** One Mormon scholar, Dr. Robert L. Millet, denied that you taught the doctrine of sin as the Church Fathers taught. He wrote, "So far as I can tell, however, Lewis did not believe that men and women are punished for what Adam and Eve did or that we individually 'sinned in

Adam, as the Christian church fathers declared.<sup>47</sup> Didn't you, in fact, teach the opposite as what Millet claimed?

Lewis: "The man who can dismiss 'sinned in Adam' as an 'idolom' and identify virtue with the herd instinct is no use to me, despite his very great learning."<sup>48</sup>

Q: Do you see all human beings as hopelessly lost in sin?

Lewis: "It is not enough to want to get rid of one's sins. We also need to believe in the one who saves us from ours sins. Not only do we need to recognize that we are sinners; we need to believe in a savior who takes away sin."<sup>49</sup>

Q: The Mormon Church recognizes sin, but quite differently. In spite of Psalm 51:5, they teach that children have no inherent sin and they have taught that Adam "fell upward."<sup>50</sup> Have you any comment on that view?

Lewis: "They say that the story of the Fall in Genesis is not literal; and then go on to say (I have heard them myself) that it was really a fall upwards—which is like saying that because "My heart is broken" contains a metaphor, it therefore means "I feel very cheerful." This mode of interpretation I regard, frankly as nonsense."<sup>51</sup>

Q: What caused the fall of Adam?

Lewis: "The moment you have a self at all, there is a possibility of putting yourself first—wanting to be the centre—wanting to be God, in fact. That was the sin of Satan; and that was the sin he taught the human race."<sup>52</sup>

Q: Are you saying that Satan tricked man to think that he could be a god?

Lewis: "What Satan put into the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they could 'be like gods'."<sup>53</sup>

Q: How do you see the result of evil from the Fall of Man?

Lewis: It is to me inconceivable that Nature as we see it is either what God intended or merely evil: it looks like a good thing spoiled. The doctrine of the Fall (both of man and of some 'gods' 'eldils'<sup>54</sup> or 'angels') is the only satisfactory explanation.<sup>55</sup>

Q: You said earlier that Satan tricked man into thinking that he will become like a god. Apparently man loses ground when he claims divinity.

Lewis: "How like a god" is a man until he makes the fatal false step of claiming divinity and goes plumb down to devil-hood."<sup>56</sup>

Q: What is the way of salvation?

Lewis: "The central Christian belief is that Christ's death has somehow put us right with God and given us a fresh start."<sup>57</sup>

Q: It appears that man had dug himself a hole without an exit. How do you describe the effect of Christ's work?

Lewis: "Laying down your arms, surrendering, saying you're sorry, realising that you've been on the wrong track and getting ready to start life over again from the ground floor—that's the only way out of our 'hole.' This process of surrender—this movement full speed astern—is what Christians call repentance."<sup>58</sup>

The doctrine of C. S. Lewis is far from that of Mormonism. To understand Lewis we see how it fits with his

monotheistic worldview. There is no room for Polytheism, Tritheism, and plural gods by his own admission. Therefore obscures statements that seem not to fit must not overrule his foundational and clear teachings, which are clearly monotheistic.

<sup>1</sup> Clive Staples Lewis (1897-1963).  
<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis: Volume 11, Books, Broadcasts, and the War, 1931-1949*. Edited by Walter Hooper. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004), 702.

<sup>3</sup> Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 1:19, states "Join none of them, for they were all wrong...all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt."

<sup>4</sup> Lewis, *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis: Volume 11*, 646.

<sup>5</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, (New York: A Harvest Book/Harcourt, Inc., 1958, 1986), 109.

<sup>6</sup> Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), 308.

<sup>7</sup> Lewis's actual answer is: "He has no body." C. S. Lewis, *The Grand Miracle: and Other Selected Essays on Theology and Ethics from God in the Dock* (New York: Ballentine Books, 1970), 75

<sup>8</sup> Louis C. Midgley, "Review of Mormonism: the Story of a New Religious Tradition," *FARMS Review of Books*, vol. 7, no. 2 (1995), 251.

<sup>9</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Literary Impact of the Authorized Version* (London: University of London Press, 1950), 14.

<sup>10</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Grand Miracle*, 73  
<sup>11</sup> Joseph Smith, *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1932-1951), 1: lxxxv - lxxxvi.

<sup>12</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1964), 21.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis, *The Grand Miracle*, 75.

<sup>14</sup> C. S. Lewis, "Miracles: a Preliminary Study," Published in *The Best of C. S. Lewis*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 271-272.

<sup>15</sup> Lewis, *Miracles*, 273.

<sup>16</sup> Lewis, *Miracles*, 353.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis, *Miracles*, 274.

<sup>18</sup> Hooper, *The Collected Letters*..., 37.

<sup>19</sup> Lewis, *Miracles*, 274.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Lewis, *Miracles*, 282.

<sup>23</sup> Hooper, *The Collected Letters*..., 915.

<sup>24</sup> Lewis, *Miracles*, 355.

<sup>25</sup> John A. Widtsoe, "Joseph Smith as Philosopher," *Improvement Era*, 1905, Vol. IX, December, 1905. No. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Hooper, *The Collected Letters*..., 870.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, *History of The Church*..., 6: 476.

<sup>28</sup> Hooper, *The Collected Letters*..., 108.

<sup>29</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The World's Last Night and Other Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960), 25.

<sup>30</sup> H. Alvah Fitzgerald, "Misconception Concerning Mormon Belief," *Improvement Era*, June, 1941.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., "God the Father" *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1-4 vols. (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 549.

<sup>32</sup> Lewis, *The Grand Miracle*..., 105.

<sup>33</sup> Widtsoe, Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, eds., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 5: The Gospels* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1986), 405.

<sup>35</sup> Kent P. Jackson, ed., *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 7: 1 Nephi to Alma 29* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1987), 245.

<sup>36</sup> Clyde S. Kilby, editor, *C. S. Lewis: Letters to an American Lady* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 14.

<sup>37</sup> Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 82.

<sup>38</sup> Hyrum L. Andrus, *Doctrinal Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1967), 179.

<sup>39</sup> Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 82.

<sup>40</sup> Lewis, *Miracles*, 231.

<sup>41</sup> Walter Hooper, editor, *C. S. Lewis: Christian Reflections* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 79.

<sup>42</sup> Lewis, *Miracles*, 283.

<sup>43</sup> Lewis, *Miracles*, 274.

<sup>44</sup> Hooper, *The Collected Letters*..., 1006.

<sup>45</sup> Lewis, *Miracles*, 285.

<sup>46</sup> Lewis, *Miracles*, 312.

<sup>47</sup> Robert L. Millet, *Selected Writings of Robert L. Millet: Gospel Scholars Series* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 2000), 476.

<sup>48</sup> Hooper, *The Collected Letters*..., 450.

<sup>49</sup> Lewis, *The Grand Miracle*, 153.

<sup>50</sup> Sterling Sill, *Deseret News*, Church Section (7 July 1965), 7.

<sup>51</sup> Lewis, *Miracles*, 277.

<sup>52</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Case for Christianity*. As published in *The Best of C. S. Lewis*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), 437.

<sup>53</sup> Lewis, *The Case*..., 438.

<sup>54</sup> Eldils are fictitious characters in the Chronicles of Namia.

<sup>55</sup> Hooper, *The Collected Letters*..., 584-585.

<sup>56</sup> Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 12.

<sup>57</sup> Lewis, *A Case for Christianity*, 441



## Jesus Taught Us To Love Our Neighbor

Jesus said to love God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength; and to love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:31). To ignore these two commandments is to offend Christ Himself. By first loving God, He makes it easier to love our neighbor. When we see God as the source of our love (for God is love, 1 John 4:8), then we see Him as the one who gives us love for those whom we do not know.

Once a person learns to love God, as Jesus said in this Bible passage, then we can more clearly see how to love our neighbor. Concerning these two love-commandments, Jesus said, "There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:31). What makes these two commandments so great? On the other hand, can you think of any greater commandment? If you say yes, then you are claiming more knowledge and wisdom than Jesus. Jesus was always confronting those who turned the commandments of God upside-down. Instead of loving God, as Jesus said, the religious people of His day claimed that there were greater duties than loving God and our neighbor. By loving God, we have become obedient to His word. In contrast, all of the religious works and duties mustered by man cannot equal submission and obedience to the greatest of God's gifts (love is the greatest gift—1 Corinthians 13:13).

- Religious works are not greater (Titus 3:5).
  - Baptism is not greater (1 Corinthians 1:17).
  - Keeping genealogies is not greater (Titus 3:9).
- Angelic messages are not greater (Gal. 1:6-9).
- Knowledge is not greater (1 Cor. 13:2).
  - Organizing a group isn't greater (1 Cor. 13:2).

What does it mean to love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind? It simply means what Jesus said. There is one God, none before Him and none after Him (Isaiah 43:10, 44:8, James 2:19). We must love God truly from our heart; but Jesus pointed out a problem with our hearts. "Our hearts are full of evil thoughts (Mark 7:21-23). We are to love this true God from our soul; but Jesus pointed out the problem of our soul. Our souls deceive us (Luke 12:19-21). We are to love God with our mind; but the Bible points out a problem with our mind. Our carnal mind is an enemy to God (Romans 8:7). We are to love God with all our strength; but Jesus pointed out a problem with our flesh. Our flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41). God did not abandon us in this despair. He provided the answer to abundant life and love through Jesus Christ.

Our sinful nature is what keeps us from loving God the way Jesus said that we should. That also is why people have trouble loving their neighbor. Jesus does not want us to do it on our own strength. God wants to work His love through us (Philippians 2:13).

To fulfill God's great desire in our lives, we must first realize is that our sinful nature separates us from God (Romans 3:23, 6:23). The only provision God has given us for sin is the atonement of Jesus on the cross (Romans 5:8, 2 Cor. 5:21). We must receive Jesus into our life to be forgiven of all sins and become righteous through His blood. It is written, "... having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (Romans 5:9). And, "... the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 5:7). Jesus said, "I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me" (Revelation 3:20).

Why put it off any longer? If your desire is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, then you can accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior today by putting your faith in Him. The Bible promises "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). Pray to the true God in Scripture right now, ask Him to forgive you of your sins and change your life. Ask Jesus to come into your heart and He will keep His promise; you will be saved! Once you have done this, read the New Testament to find out more about Jesus. Pray often and attend a Bible-centered Church.

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