

In the Bible, there's 4 different Gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and they **all** record the life, death and resurrection of Jesus... And you'd think that if you've read one of them, you've read them all... No – They're all different...

The Gospel of John, is **very** different to the others, but then M, M, & L are quite **similar** to each other. They're called "The Synoptic Gospels", coming from the Latin "*synopticus*", which means "seen together"...

And you've probably noticed, that some sections of M, M & L are almost identical... Plagiarism wasn't really a 'no-no', back then. And so if a Gospel writer agreed with what somebody else had already written, why re-invent the wheel? They had no qualms at all, about copying it into their own Gospel.

But even though they're similar, there **are** differences between them, which makes each Gospel unique. Each Gospel has its own message. And the message that Matthew will highlight from a particular event, may very-well be quite different to the message that Mark highlights from exactly the same event... They're not in opposition to each other – they just highlight different things.

And some people try to discredit Christianity, because of these differences between the Gospels, "*Look, there's discrepancies. They can't be trusted... They can't even agree with each other. It can't be true*",,,

But it's actually the other way around. Those who are trained in assessing evidence of any kind, know very well, that if eye-witnesses' all agree with each other on every little detail, that's a pretty good sign that they're making it all up, and that they've colluded to get their stories straight.

But when **genuine** eye-witnesses, all observe the same thing, they remember it in slightly different ways. And so we would **expect** the Gospels to have slight differences, and they do.

...

Now, Matthew, Mark and Luke, **all** record this interaction that we read about today, and most of us will have heard it preached on many times, and why wouldn't we? – it's very important stuff:

As Matthew records, all of the Law and the Prophets can be summed up with these 2 commandments

- Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
- love your neighbour as yourself.

But while what Jesus said, is essentially the same, and the key point remains unchanged, Mark's perspective, and therefore the lesson we learn from Mark, is quite different to what we learn from Matthew and Luke...

Now, I want you to remember, that Mark and Luke were **not** there in person. Neither Mark **nor** Luke, were one of the original 12 Disciples. What they did, was they collated stories

from people who **were** there. ... And in the case of Mark, tradition has it, that he based most of his writings on what Peter had told him...

But of course, we don't know this for certain – I'm just thankful that there was **someone** who was willing to record the testimony of those who **had** seen it and who **had** heard what Jesus said, so that we can have this marvellous testimony, 2000 years later.

So, what's the difference? Well, from the perspective of Matthew and Luke, they saw this interaction between Jesus and the Scribe, as another attempt to **test** Jesus (catch Him out). But Mark saw something different...

We're in a section of Mark, where Jesus **has** been getting hammered by the religious leaders. They're testing Him and trying to catch-him-out.

- 11:27-12:12 Chief priests; Scribes; Elders
- 12:13-17 Pharisees; Herodians
- 12:18-27 Sadducees

And now, from v28, there is 1 solitary Scribe – And the way Mark describes him:- he's someone who **saw** the interaction between Jesus and the Sadducees, and he's impressed with Jesus. He likes the way He handled Himself. And so he asks Him, (non-antagonistic) "**Which commandment is the most important of all?**"

And, from the way the discussion unfolds, I'm pretty sure this man **is** looking for a **summary** of the Law – he's wanting to know the **Spirit** of the Law. I don't think he's wanting to know which of the 613 separate commandmentsⁱ (that could be found in the book of the Law), is more important than the other 612. He's wanting to know the Spirit of the Law.

And that's actually a Godly thing – to want to know the **Spirit** of the Law, and want to **obey** the Spirit of the Law...

Romans 2:¹⁴ For when *Gentiles*, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness.....

And that's the way God wants us to live – yes, living by faith, but having the **ability** to live by faith, because we're living by the Holy Spirit, who builds in to us, an understanding of the Spirit of the Law – it gets written on our hearts...

And Jesus' reply, ticks this box – it reveals the Spirit of the Law – a summary of the Law...

Now, there was nothing new or novel in Jesus' answer. He began by quoting what's known as “the *Shema*”... The “*Shema*” was a sentence, which was quoted at the beginning of every service at a Synagogue. “*Shema*”, is the Hebrew word for “Hear”. And it's the first word of the *Shema* (hence

its name). And the *Shema* clearly states, that there is **one** God, and **one** God only – YHWH...

Deuteronomy 6:4–5

⁴ "Hear, O Israel: YHWH our God, YHWY is one.
⁵ You shall love YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Now, at the time of Jesus, they would never use God's personal Name "YHWH". They were afraid that if they said it in the wrong way, they might take it in vain, and be stoned... And so at the Synagogue, they would say,

Deuteronomy 6:4–5 (ESV)

⁴ "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Now, I've told you this before, but I'm going to say it again, because there might be someone new listening to this today.

You might be reading along in your own Bible, and wondering why your bible says "The LORD", but I've said YHWH. That's because, in the Old Testament of your Bible, whenever you see the word THE LORD (in all capitals), or the word "GOD" in all capitals, the actual Hebrew word, is God's personal name "YHWH". If you're not sure about that, turn to the front of your Bible, and in the preface or in the translation notes, you'll find that explained.ⁱⁱ

And it's really important that we know this. We live in an era, where many people want to believe that all the religions worship the same god – they're just known by different names... But the Scriptures (both Old and New Testaments) will have none of that. We cannot possibly ever consider that "the Lord" could be referring to any old god (Buddha; Allah; or any other)

⁴ "Hear, O Israel: YHWH our God, YHWY is one.
⁵ You shall love YHWH your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Oh you Christians – you're so exclusive... No. It's not that we're exclusive... We worship all true gods, but there is only one... God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit... YHWH is one. He is our God, and we love Him with all of our heart; soul; might...

Alright, so when Jesus was asked "Which commandment is greatest?", He began by identifying **which** God gives the commandments, and therefore, which God we worship and obey. YHWH... The LORD. The only One True God...

And He says:

³⁰ ... 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.'

Now, we could spend the next 30 minutes analysing each of those words in the Greek:

- καρδίας (kardias) heart
- ψυχῆς (psyches) soul

- διανοίας (dianoias) mind
- ισχύος (ischyos) strength

And we could probably have a sermon on each of those over the next 4 weeks:

- on loving God with all of our heart
- soul
- mind
- strength

Or we could just agree, that it means (by putting all 4 of these together) to love God with every part of our being... To love God in everything we think, feel, do and say.

The Lord doesn't just want us to be affectionate towards Him – He doesn't just want us to have a preference for Him, or a soft-spot for Him – He wants us to love Him, with every part of our Being... That's the first and greatest commandment...

You know, some people like to think that they don't need a saviour. They believe they've lived a good life, and therefore they've kept the Spirit of the Law – they believe they're good with God... But are they really?

I know I haven't love God with all of my heart; soul; mind; strength... That, is the first and greatest commandment, and I've failed.

And Jesus went on:

³¹ The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Once again, this wasn't a new concept. Lev 19:18 says the same thing, **but** it only applies it to their fellow Jewish neighbour – “love your fellow Jewish neighbour as yourself”... But Jesus left that proviso out. It's not only those who are closest to us, and those who are like us, who we are to love – it's **all** people...

That's a pretty big challenge, isn't it... – to love others as much as you love yourself... You know, this is much bigger than just making sure that I don't take the last piece of chocolate cake ... It's much bigger than that...

To love my neighbour as I love myself – that's enormous...

- It encompasses **not** doing wrong to my neighbour;
- **Includes** doing good for my neighbour;
- It's about relationship
- Fairness
- Generosity
- But it's also about **hard love** – Sometimes our neighbour needs help, to stop being their own worst enemy...

But of course there's limits... Sometimes our neighbour doesn't want our love ...

But the point is, all of the Law and the prophets, can be summed up in those 2 commands.

And the Scribe saw the wisdom in this:

He said: “**Yeah! Go Jesus!!!**”.... No, he didn't actually say that, but pretty close to it:

³² "You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him.

³³ And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, is **much more** than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

You know what??? This bloke 'got it'... And this is what Mark is revealing to us... The prevailing attitude of all of the religious and political leaders, was dead against Jesus,, but there were a few who 'got it'...

In the Gospel of John, we hear about Nicodemus – a Pharisee, who came to Jesus in the dead of night,, And he turns up again, to embalm the body of Jesus when He's taken down from the cross...

There were a few who got it – even amongst the religious leaders... And this scribe, is one of those who got it...

And it's the same today... Many, many people, will hear the word of God, and most will reject it,, But a very few will Get it...

And this scribe – he got it... His understanding, had **depth** to it.

- When Jesus cursed the fig tree and it died; and
- When Jesus chased the traders out of the Temple; and

- particularly when Jesus said “**My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations, but you have made it a den of robbers**”,

If you can remember back a few weeks, when we studied this, then you might remember that this was Jesus’ condemnation that their empty religious observances, **would not save them**. The temple sacrificial system, was going to come to an end. It was going to end, because they believed that, simply by them keeping the prescribed sacrifices, they could just go on (willy-nilly) doing whatever they liked... - oppressing the widow and the orphan; lying, cheating and stealing; and not caring for the foreigner... And come back again next week, make another sacrifice and they’re all good again...

And this scribe, got it.

To love God with all of your being, and to love your neighbour like yourself, is much better than all the burnt sacrifices...

He got it... In the last 2 chapters of Mark, this is what Jesus has been teaching. This is what Jesus has been demonstrating,,, and one scribe got it....

V³⁴ And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “**You are not far from the kingdom of God.**”

You’re not there yet, but you’re not far from it... I wonder, “What was missing?”

Surely that's enough – to love God with every fibre of your being; and to love your neighbour as yourself... Surely that's enough... No it's not...

You know, some people try to do one or the other...

- Some reject God, and they believe “provided I live a good life and I'm nice to other people, I'll be right”...
- Others have the attitude: “Because I'm saved by grace alone, I'll love God, and it doesn't matter how I treat other people, because He'll forgive me.”...

Don't be deceived... It takes both... In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells us that The second commandment is like the first. You cannot truly love God, and at the same time, treat your neighbour badly... If I truly love God with every fibre of my being, I will love my too... If I don't, I don't really love God at all.

But even that doesn't get me across the line... **“You are not far from the kingdom of God.”**, but he's not there yet.

Sometimes I find myself wishing that we didn't have the little headings that we do in our bibles... God didn't put them there – man put them there, and I know why – it helps us to navigate our way around the Bible...

But in my Bible, at this point, there's a little heading there, that says, **“Whose Son is the Christ?”** Now, there's nothing wrong with that heading, apart from the fact, that most of us probably assume that the lesson's finished at this point, and a new one's beginning... Jesus hasn't finished... As we read

on, we begin to understand why “The Scribe’s not far from the Kingdom of God, but he’s not there yet.”...

V34 ends by saying:

And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

V35 begins by saying:

³⁵ And as Jesus taught in the temple, he said

Alright, we’ve moved from questioning, to teaching... What do you think Jesus is going to teach us? Well, remember, He’s been addressing a Scribe – a scribe who’s not far from the Kingdom of God, but he’s not there yet...

What’s wrong, is that when it comes to the Messiah, the Scribes expected that the Messiah was going to be subordinate to David... - a great king, but still a son of David – Less than David...

What was missing, is the fact that the Messiah is Lord... Even David, speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit, knew that the Messiah, is his Lord.

Jesus said:

“How can the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶ David himself, in the Holy Spirit, declared,

“ ‘The Lord said to my Lord,

“Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet.” ’

³⁷ David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?”

Now, let's go to Psalm 110 – a Psalm of David, where this is quoted from:

Psalm 110:1 (ESV)

¹ The LORD [ALL CAPITALS {YHWH}] says to my Lord
[Little letters {Adonai}]:
"Sit at my right hand,
until I make your enemies your footstool."

Jesus' point: ³⁷ David himself calls him Lord. So how is he his son?"

Jesus is correcting the Scribe's view of 'the Christ'. The Christ – the Messiah, is Lord... They believed that the Christ is the Son of David, but who is He **really** the Son of??? The whole purpose of the Gospel of Mark, is to reveal that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

We asked, "What's missing?" The Scribe was near to the Kingdom of God, but he wasn't there yet – What extra thing was missing????

Well, it's not actually an added extra at all – It's the essential element of faith... It's the essential element required, to enter the Kingdom of God... To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, [not David's son, but] the Son of God....

So, what did Jesus teach us today?

- There is one God, and one God alone...
- The most important commandment that this God has given us, is to Love Him, with all of our heart; soul; mind; and strength... - to love Him with every fibre of our being...
- And to love our neighbour as ourselves....

But even if I could do all that, and never fail (which I can't), there remains one essential element...

How can I truly love God, if I don't recognise that His son, Jesus Christ, is Lord...

This is where faith begins... Many people are willing to have some kind of concept of a faith in God, but not so many are willing to recognise His son, Jesus Christ, as Lord...

Many strive and hope to receive the Kingdom of God,

- by loving God in **their** way; or
- by trying to be a good person and loving their neighbour in **their** way;
- Some people even try to do both of those...

It's a pride thing isn't it – I want to do it on my terms – I want to do it my way...

But Jesus is the only way to the Kingdom of God...

And if you haven't already given your heart to Jesus, I invite you (No, I more than invite you – I urge you), to give your heart to Jesus today.

How can I be saved? Well, it begins by recognising that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God...

- Repent of sin
- Tell God you're sorry for everything you've done
 - For trying to do things your own way
 - Not recognising Him as the only true god
 - For when you haven't loved Him (heart; soul; mind; strength)
 - For rejecting His son
- But repentance is more than being sorry – as one little child said, “Repentance is being sorry enough to stop”.

And so we repent of sin, and

- we hand our lives over to Jesus.

And then, we're ready to live as God would have us live

- To love Him with every fibre of our being
- Keeping nothing back for myself
- And loving my neighbour, because it's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me...

Let's pray:

Lord Jesus Christ,

And we mean that, with every fine definition of what those terms mean.

You are Lord; You are our Lord;

You are the Christ – the anointed one – The only begotten Son of the One True God.

Lord Jesus Christ,

We render ourselves to You.

You are the Lord. You created us.

And you died for us. You redeemed us.

You bought us back again.

Thank You Jesus.

Lord, we have sinned against you...

Even the most simplest and the greatest commandment, we have broken – Over and over again, we've broken it.

We have not loved you with our whole heart; soul; mind; strength.

We have not loved others as ourselves...

God, forgive us.

Lord, help us, from this day forth,

To be the children that You have saved us to be,

People who love you with every fibre of our being, because we've been forgiven;

People who love our neighbour as ourself, because You've taken up residence in our heart, and You're changing us to become like you.

Lord, we ask, that You would not only welcome us into the Kingdom of God, but that You would build us **into** Your Kingdom, – a kingdom of Your saints, on this earth, as we live as Your disciples, in this community.

In Jesus' Name,
Amen.

ⁱ “Given that there are, according to scribal reckoning, 613 separate commandments in the five Books of Moses (R. Simlai [c. 250] in *b. Mak.* 23b) Given that there are, according to scribal reckoning, 613 separate commandments in the five Books of Moses (R. Simlai [c. 250] in *b. Mak.* 23b)” in France, R.T., 2002. *The Gospel of Mark: a commentary on the*

Greek text, Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

ⁱⁱ In the translation of biblical terms referring to God, the ESV takes great care to convey the specific nuances of meaning of the original Hebrew and Greek words. First, concerning terms that refer to God in the Old Testament: God, the Maker of heaven and earth, introduced himself to the people of Israel with a special personal name, the consonants for which are YHWH (see Exodus 3:14–15). Scholars call this the “Tetragrammaton,” a Greek term referring to the four Hebrew letters YHWH. The exact pronunciation of YHWH is uncertain, because the Jewish people considered the personal name of God to be so holy that it should never be spoken aloud. Instead of reading the word YHWH, therefore, they would normally read the Hebrew word *'adonay* (“Lord”), and the ancient translations into Greek, Syriac, and Aramaic also followed this practice. When the vowels of the word *'adonay* are placed with the consonants of YHWH, this results in the familiar word *Jehovah* that was used in some earlier English Bible translations. As is common among English translations today, the ESV usually renders the personal name of God (YHWH) by the word LORD (printed in small capitals). An exception to this is when the Hebrew word *'adonay* appears together with YHWH, in which case the two words are rendered together as “the Lord [in lowercase] GOD [in small capitals].” In contrast to the personal name for God (YHWH), the more general name for God in Old Testament Hebrew is *'elohim* and its related forms of *'el* or *'eloah*, all of which are normally translated “God” (in lowercase letters). The use of these different ways to translate the Hebrew words for God is especially beneficial to English readers, enabling them to see and understand the different ways that the *personal* name and the *general* name for God are both used to refer to the *One True God* of the Old Testament.