

January 22, 2021

Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. Matthew 22:37 NIV

This directive from the lips of Jesus was so important that Mark and Luke also included it in their writings. (See Mark 12:30,31 and Luke 10:27). Love is the basis of God, and His government and through the ten commandments given at Sinai, the character of God is revealed.

Consider the first of the ten commandments. *You shall have no other gods before me. Exodus 20:3.* It's a simplified way of saying what Jesus said: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your soul.* God wants us to acknowledge Him as our Creator, as the source of our life, as the reason we exist and follow him.

When God gave this law to the Israelites, they had just been sprung from the oppression of the Egyptians where the pharaohs *called themselves* gods, so this is a very fitting place for God to begin instructing his people. They had also born witness to a mighty deliverance at the Red Sea, and were continually aware of His presence through a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. In this first commandment, the Lord was instructing them not to put any other allegiances in front of their worship to Him.

This first commandment doesn't address any particular, outward behavior, but it does give guidance for a mindset, critical instruction as to the allegiance of our hearts. It points us to a mindset designed to protect us from our own desperately wicked human hearts (see Jeremiah 17:9). The apostle Paul said: *And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. Corinthians 3:18 KJV.* By beholding, we are changed. When we put God first, we allow Him to guide, direct, influence and lead us and when we do this, we are transformed. It is such an easy concept, that I understand why God made it the first in a step of ten. He wants us to succeed!

What are you beholding? What do you love? What do you stay focused on day by day, hour by hour? Are you beholding your Creator God, or have human ideologies and world views distracted you from the fact that God Himself is involved in a war to save **your** soul?

With this very first commandment given so many years ago at Sinai, God reveals the foundation of His character to be that of love. He knows that if we put Him first, worship only Him, and let nothing come between our acknowledgement of and obedience to Him, then we will be transformed at a heart level, and following His guidance through the next nine commandments will not be difficult.

Jesus said, *If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto me.*' John 12:32 These words reflect the very same concept found in the first commandment, '*You shall have no other gods before me.*' In His great love and determination to save and redeem humanity, the Lord offers a guarantee if we put Him first. His love, His mercy, His grace ... all of it is available to the one who has no other gods, but the great IAM, the Creator of world, the Redeemer of humanity, the Savior who is coming back to take us home.