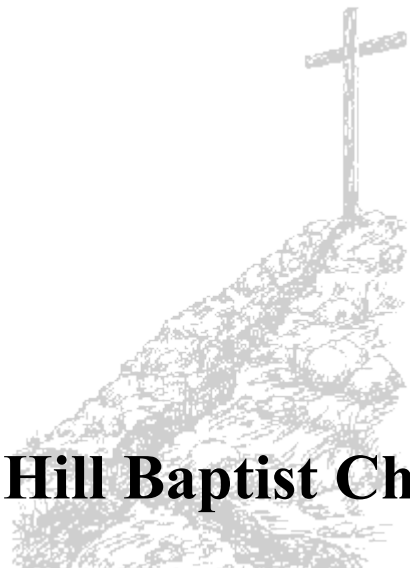


Whom Do I Serve?

Love Is The Target

Deuteronomy 10:12-20



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FOCAL Deuteronomy 10:12-20 (KJV) "And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, {13} To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? {14} Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. {15} Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. {16} Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff necked. {17} For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: {18} He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. {19} Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. {20} Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name."

From the beginning of the Church Age there has always been *confusion* between Israel and the Church. When I say *confusion*, I do not mean that God is confused, nor dismayed, nor will He ever be in any one of these states. God is God, the Almighty, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace - and He knows all things. And God has never confused Israel with the Church. But we, being human, often try to blend the two.

Israel is Israel, and the Church is the Church. The Apostle said:

Romans 11:1-5 (KJV) "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. {2} God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew. Wot ye not what the scripture saith of Elias? how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, {3} Lord, they have killed thy prophets, and digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. {4} But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. {5} Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."

God hath not cast away His people which He foreknew. Israel is in God's Plan of the Ages, and Israel will one day be in possession of all the Promised Land during that Millennial Kingdom when Christ shall rule that nation. The sacrifice that our Lord made on Calvary applies *equally to both Jew and Gentile, for the Bible says:*

John 1:11 (KJV) "He came unto his own, [the Jews] and his own received him not."

But this does not mean that Israel is done, nor does it mean that the Church has taken Israel's place in God's Plan. Often we get confused over the simplest of things, and we can't see the forest for the trees.

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson went on a camping trip. After a good meal and a bottle of wine they lay down for the night, and went to sleep. Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend. "Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see." Watson replied, "I see millions and millions of stars." Holmes asked, "What does that tell you?" Watson pondered for a minute. "Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets. Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo. Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three. Theologically, I can see that God is omnipotent and that we are small and insignificant. Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow. ..." "What does it tell you?" Holmes was silent for a minute, then spoke. "Watson, you meat head. Someone has stolen our tent."

Though the Church and Israel are *two distinct and separate entities* in the economy of God, our Father ***treats both groups*** as His chosen people. Jesus Christ came to be:

Luke 2:32 (KJV) "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."

Israel rejected Messiah - though not all of Israel. Christ continues to save His Church, and will one day come to take us away from this life as His Bride. But He will not forsake His people Israel, and a remnant shall be saved.

Though Israel and the Church are *two distinctly separate*

entities in the Scripture, they are *chosen* and *loved* by the same God. Because God has not changed from the Old Testament to the New, **He expects the same love from either Israel or the Church.**

The Importance Of The Shema

FOCAL Deuteronomy 10:12 (KJV) "And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul ..."

ppt Here we see the Shema² repeated in the Scripture. Remember a few lessons ago we studied a *foundational doctrine* in both Christianity as well as Judaism - the Shema. The Shema (which means "Hear, and Hearing Apply") states:

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (KJV) "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: {5} And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

that Israel was to love God, the One and only God Yahweh, with **all their heart**. The importance of the Shema was passed on to the Church by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when He said:

Matthew 22:36-40 (KJV) "... Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. {38} This is the first and great

1 flag for Powerpoint Display

2 originally given Deuteronomy 6:4-5

commandment. {39} And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. {40} On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."³

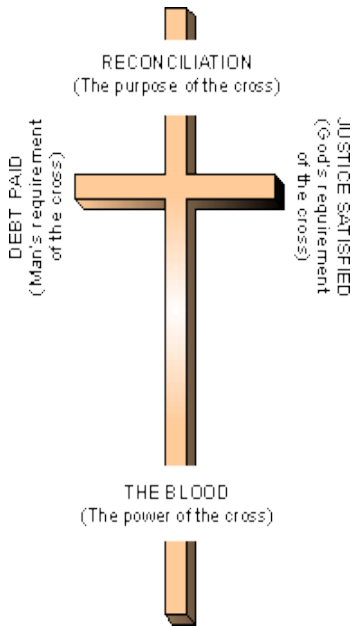
ppt Jesus Christ interpreted the Shema to be the GREATEST COMMANDMENT that we - either Jew or Gentile - have. He said that the "law and the prophets" very foundation rested on loving God *totally and unreservedly*. That term **law and the prophets** is a very Jewish reference to the the Scripture, the Holy Bible. The Jews didn't call the Bible "the Bible", they called it "the law and the prophets". What our Lord was telling us is this: if you fail to understand that the *most important thing* is to love God wholeheartedly, then you may understand all the Bible Doctrine you want but you'll be no where near the truth. For **Doctrine, the law and the prophets, cannot be interpreted and applied apart from Love! You must love!** You must love God absolutely, with *all your heart* and then love your neighbor as yourself.

We've mentioned before that *love* is not merely an emotion, but it is *doing the highest good for it's object*. The Shema was *a command to love*, and you certainly can't command an emotion. I was watching an old rerun of the Cosby Show the other day when one child gave her definition of love. She said "When a boy says he doesn't love me, I tell him 'you're going to love me till I tell you to stop loving me buddy!' " That really got a laugh, and well it should. To command something like emotional love is impossible. But the Biblical definition

3 also Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:27-28; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8

of love is not mere emotion, but it is always *doing the highest good toward to other person*. When God commands us to love Him with **all our hearts** in the Shema, that means the top goal for the believer's walk is to move through this life in such a way that he or she is pleasing to the Savior.

FOCAL Deuteronomy 10:13-15 (KJV) "... To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? {14} Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. {15} Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day."



If the Israelite obeyed the Shema, then *they did what Yahweh said*. The highest good that any person can do for God is to do what He says. But Israel *as well as the Christian* has a good reason for loving God wholeheartedly⁴. ppt

1 First of all, we see when God invokes a command on us it is (vs 13) **for thy good**. The Bible says:

1 John 4:21 (KJV) "And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother

4 graphic from <http://www.5loaves2fishes.org.nz/Clipart.htm#growth>

also."

1 John 5:1-3 (KJV) "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him. {2} By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. {3} For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous⁵."

God's commands are **not grievous**, not given to torture or burden us. His commandments are always given **for our good**. In verse 14 we read that God made all things - **the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is**. Remember when God made all things, at the end of each day of creation He said *it was good*. This same God Who made all things good in the beginning, Yahweh commands you *for your own good*. You will be as perfect, as stable, as blessed as a human can be if you love Him wholeheartedly and do what He commands, for it is for your own good! This is true for both Israel as well as the Church. ppt

2 Second we see that ... drum roll please God *loves you!* We read in verse 15 **the LORD** (that's Yahweh) **had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you ABOVE ALL PEOPLE**. Israel was not chosen because she was the best and brightest of the nations. She was chosen

5 barus {pronounced bar-ooce'}, burdensome, violent, cruel, weighty, to torture someone

because Yahweh decided to set His Love on her. In the same way, dear Christian, you are not saved because you are the best and brightest of humanity. In that wonderful Epistle we call Ephesians we read: ppt

Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJV) "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: {9} Not of works, lest any man should boast."

I have often wondered why God loves me as He does, as flawed and imperfect as this old sinner is. And then I read those words, those Amazing Words, **by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.** We who are the saved should willingly lay down anything that we have before the Savior's feet, for we are a *loved people* created to do *good works*. That's what the next verse in Ephesians tells us:

Ephesians 2:10 (KJV) "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

We are designed to be like our Father, to *walk in good works*. As He walked through eternity Love demanded an object to love, so Love created the Heavens and the Earth in six days ... and *it was good*. Love is, by its very nature, compelled to do good toward even the undeserving. We did not earn His love - nor did Israel - He just saved us because He chose to set His love on us. Read a little further in Ephesians with me:

Ephesians 2:11-12 (KJV) "Wherefore remember,

that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; {12} That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:"

As *Gentiles* there was a time when we were **without Christ**. We were **aliens from the common wealth of Israel**, that is, we were excluded from the precious blessings that God gave to His first chosen. We were **strangers from the covenant of promise**. We could not call Abraham our Father, nor were we given any place in the plan of God. This was true insofar as Israel was concerned. We were utterly cut off from God, **without God in the world** - and how dark the world is without God. Read further:

Ephesians 2:13-14 (KJV) "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. {14} For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;"

What sweet words are here, **but now in Christ Jesus**. We who were far off have been brought near by His sacrificial Blood, by the Blood of Calvary! Why should we love God with all our hearts? Because God loved US with all of His! There is no greater truth in the Scripture than this. ppt

The Significance of "Circumcision of The Heart"

FOCAL Deuteronomy 10:16 (KJV) "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff necked."

Now we come to a *very interesting* command given to Israel in the Scripture, "**circumcise the foreskin of your heart**". I don't want to be indelicate but, Beloved, it's in the Scripture, so we're going to study it! What does it mean to **circumcise the heart**?

Circumcision was a *surgical procedure* that God established early on in Israel. Now God never gave the Gentile world such a thing, but Israel was commanded to have *every male child circumcised by the eighth day following his birth*. Circumcision was *commanded*, and that command was *never revoked by Jesus*. The Israelite, even today, is circumcised following his birth.

What God is talking about when He says *circumcise your heart* is something entirely different from the command that was given to Israel back in Genesis Chapter 17. God was telling His people to *cut around their hearts*, to *cut away anything that stood between the people and God*.

It is possible to allow the world around you to *enter into your soul* and, once entering, to *form a callous place* on that part of the soul the Bible calls "**the heart**". Israel had *hardened the heart* to God's wooing by allowing the ways of the unbelievers around them to come into their lives. Just as Pharaoh *hardened his heart* toward God⁶,

Israel allowed the ways of the world to come into her life until she hardened her heart toward God. This *hardening of the heart* would be the reason that would cause the first generation of Israel to die in the desert: ppt

Psalms 95:7-11 (KJV) "For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, {8} Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: {9} When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. {10} Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: {11} Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest."

When a believer begins play in the sins of this world then, like a small child in the mud, he cannot help come away from the game very muddy. So it was with Israel. The first generation of Israel never fully repented of the things of Egypt, and these *pleasures* and the call of them caused the first generation to die in a waterless place - whereas the Egyptian Army died in a watery place. Different method, but same death!

God told His people to *cut around their hearts* because He wanted them to cut away or *repent of* the forbidden things, and turn back to loving Him wholeheartedly. Again, *this was for their own good*. God's people are called to *be wholly committed to the Savior*. A life totally committed to Him is *the only life that will be truly happy*. Before Jesus went to the Cross He told His disciples: ppt

⁶ see Exodus 7:14

John 16:22 (KJV) "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you."

that the Christian way of life was a *joyful* way of life, a *permanently joyful* way of life. Our Lord said "**your joy no man taketh from you**". No man can take the Christian's joy from him, as long as your heart is tender toward God. But you can give your joy away by compromising with the world or the devil thereof! For that reason God tells Israel and His Church that we should *cut around our hearts*, making them tender to His Spirit and His Word. If the world has hardened your heart, and you have lost the *joy of your unique salvation* then repent from where you have fallen, turning back to the Lord Jesus Christ with all your heart. The Bible makes it clear that there are *two states of man*: the state of **being in the flesh or unsaved, tied to this physical world**, and the state of **being in the Spirit, saved, tied to God your Father by the Blood of Christ**:

Romans 8:7-9 (KJV) "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. {8} So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. {9} But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Those who are *in the flesh* or unsaved are the *enemies of God, unable to obey Him*. So the unbeliever follows a pattern of life that suits himself, suits the flesh. The unbeliever may be moral or immoral, but all unbelievers

ultimately *have no regard for loving God as the Shema commands*. In fact, they *cannot* love God, for the unsaved mind **cannot please God**. Christians, we must not fall into this manner of life! This is the manner of the unbeliever, the unsaved, the unbound by love! The unsaved follow the *lust patterns of the flesh*, not the love of God. They are the *enemies of the Cross of Christ*:

Philippians 3:18-19 (KJV) "(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: {19} Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)"

... **Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly** ... this is not what we were saved to be.

As Christians we are to love God whole heartedly above all else. We are to put Him first in all things, asking Him what He would have us do. And when we do this we will discover what millions of other believers have found to be true - God's way is always the best way to live my life day by day.

May God touch your heart with these words.

Doctrine of Circumcision - End Note

One of the key differences between Israel and the Church is the Doctrine of Circumcision. The *direct descendants of Abraham*, the seed of Isaac - was given the command

to be circumcised in Genesis chapter 17. We read:

Genesis 17:10-14 (KJV) "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised. {11} And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. {12} And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. {13} He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. {14} And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."

You need to notice that *circumcision* - or the cutting off of the foreskin - had *absolutely nothing to do with salvation*. Circumcision was a mark of the Direct Covenant - a mark of the Israelite. The Jew was circumcised on *the eighth day following birth* - and there is no way that an eight day old child can believe in God. Circumcision was the mark of the Israelite, a symbol only, and had no power to save.

In the New Testament Church we see how the Apostle Paul interpreted circumcision. When Paul went forward on his missionary journey to witness Christ to his Jewish brethren, he commanded that the young convert Timothy be circumcised. We read:

(Acts 16:1-3 KJV) "Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named **Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: {2} Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium. {3} Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek."**

Timothy's mother was Jewish, and his father was Greek. Because Timothy was *born of a Jewish mother* Paul had him circumcised. Did this act make Timothy any more saved? No, absolutely not! But Paul knew that God gave the descendants of Israel a *command* to be circumcised. Timothy, who was Jewish/Greek, was going with Paul, thus Paul felt that it was best that Timothy be circumcised. This followed the Biblical principle of:

(1 Corinthians 9:19-23 KJV) "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. {20} And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; {21} To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. {22} To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. {23} And this I do for the gospel's sake,

that I might be partaker thereof with you."

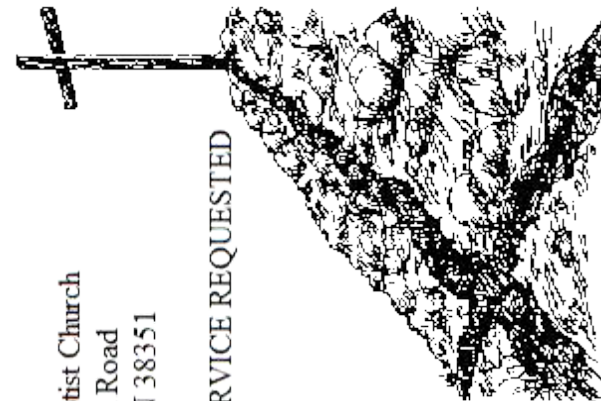
Timothy was just as saved WITHOUT circumcision as he was with circumcision, for salvation has ALWAYS come by faith alone in Christ alone (**Habakkuk 2:4; Romans 1:17**). But Timothy, though saved, was *still of Israel*, and still needed to be circumcised according to Genesis 17.

Sometime later Paul had a serious disagreement with the Apostle Peter when he tried to get Titus, a Gentile Christian, to be circumcised. We read:

(Galatians 2:3-5 KJV) "But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: {4} And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: {5} To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."

Titus was *not of Israel*, and there was no reason for him to be circumcised. Circumcision was purely an outward sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, not a necessary element for salvation. Paul had Timothy circumcised, but Titus was exempt. The difference was whether the believer was *of Israel* or not.

But whether you are of Timothy (Jewish) or of Titus (Gentile), you are still required by God to *circumcise your heart* before the Lord your God.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED