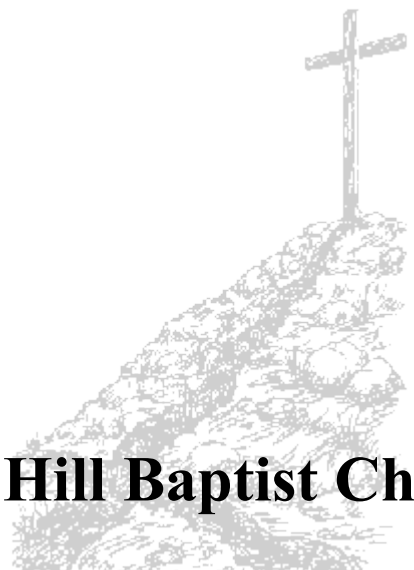


The Shema, Part Two

Everything Is A Tool or An Idol

Deuteronomy 6:4-5



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FOCAL Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (KJV) "Hear¹, O Israel: The LORD² our God³ is one⁴ LORD²: {5} And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

We've already studied the introduction to the Shema, the *foundational truth* that both Judaism and Christianity are built on. In verse 4 we saw that the Shema teaches the Trinity of God, the *uniqueness* of God, the *immutability* or changeless Being of God, the *sovereignty* of God, and the *timelessness* of God. Our God was, is, and will always be Who He is. He is Creator, Sustainer, Controller, and Lover of all that He has made. Now here is another great truth:

1. Everything In Life Is A Tool or An Idol

FOCAL Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (KJV) "Hear⁵, O Israel: The LORD⁶ our God⁷ is one⁸ LORD²: {5} And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart..."

When God created man, He created him (and her) with the ability to love the Lord. Satan came into the picture and convinced both Adam and Eve that the reason they were not to eat of the forbidden fruit was because *God*

- 1 shama' {pronounced shaw-mah'}, Qal Imperative, Hear! Listen! Pay Attention To!
- 2 YHWH - the Tetragrammaton, or Eternal Name of God, Yahweh
- 3 Elohiym, plural word describing the compound unity of God
- 4 echad, a compound unity. Used of God in the Trinity. See part one of this study for further details
- 5 shama' {pronounced shaw-mah'}, Qal Imperative, Hear! Listen! Pay Attention To!
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loved Himself more than He loved them. The devil told our foreparents:

Genesis 3:5 (KJV) "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods⁹, knowing good and evil."

The implication was **"God loves Himself more than He loves you - that's why you're told to leave that fruit alone. But you deserve that fruit! Go ahead, eat! You, too, can be *elohiym*."** Notice that Satan uses the *first name of God given in Scripture*, Elohiym, when enticing our first parents to fall into sin. This is the same message that Satan has given to humans from the very beginning, that *you, too, can become God*.

Everything in life is either a tool or an idol. When God created us He placed us in a Garden free from sin and terror. In the midst of that Garden He placed *one tree* that we were forbidden to eat from:

Genesis 2:17 (KJV) "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

The tree was God's tool of testing for our foreparents. They failed miserably, and in so doing brought death on all humanity. They should have used that tree *as a tool* to honor and love YHWH Elohiym. Instead of loving God Adam and Eve *idolized* that tree and brought death on us all.

⁹ אֱלֹהִים 'elohiym {pronounced el-o-heem' }, the first name God gives us of Himself in the Scripture ... Genesis 1:1 *in the beginning Elohiym*

FOCAL Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (KJV) "Hear¹⁰, O Israel: The LORD¹¹ our God¹² is one¹³ LORD²: {5} And thou shalt love¹⁴ the LORD thy God with all thine heart ..."

The Shema reminds all who will hear that there is only One YHWH Elohiym. You are not God, neither am I God - there is only One God, and He demands the love of the believer. Everything that you possess whether it be car, home, food, or even life itself is either a *tool to love God with*, or an *idol that drives you from the Garden of God's love*. God's command in the Shema is:

"... And thou shalt love¹⁵ the LORD thy God with all thine heart ... "

This was the test that God gave Adam and Eve: **"Do you love Me more, or do you love yourselves more?"** You all know the answer. They loved themselves more, and in so doing brought death on us all that very day. It is interesting that the *second time* this *exact same word* is used in Scripture is in

Genesis 22:2 (KJV) "And he said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest¹⁴, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of."

¹⁰ shama' {pronounced shaw-mah'}, Qal Imperative, Hear! Listen! Pay Attention To!

¹¹ YHWH - the Tetragrammaton, or Eternal Name of God, Yahweh

¹² Elohiym, plural word describing the compound unity of God

¹³ echad, a compound unity. Used of God in the Trinity. See part one of this study for further details

¹⁴ Qal Perfect 'aheb {pronounced aw-habe'}, to love fervently

God put man in the Garden, gave him a choice of loving a *tree* or loving YHWH Elohiym, and man chose the tree. Now God comes to Abraham and asks him the same question: "**Who do you love more: Me or your son?**" Abraham had to make a choice, a very interesting choice. You see, Abraham was from *Ur of the Chaldees*¹⁵, or ancient Babylon. The area he grew up in worshiped many false gods, gods who often demanded that the *firstborn child* of the family be offered in sacrifice. God had never demanded this type of sacrifice from Abraham before, but now He does. What will you choose, Abraham? Will you use *the tool of your son, your only son* to show your love to God, or will Isaac *become an idol* that will take you from God? We all know the answer to that question. Abraham led his son up that Mountain called Moriah, telling him:

Genesis 22:8 (KJV) "... My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together."

When Abraham was faced with the choice of using Isaac as a *tool by which he showed his love to God*, or *idolizing* that child, Abraham chose to offer the child to God. Mount Moriah, by the way, is the same place where King Solomon built the first Temple to God¹⁶. When Abraham offered his son to Elohiym our God stopped him from finishing the act. The Lord told Abraham:

¹⁵ See **Genesis 11:28-31; 15:7**

¹⁶ See **2 Chronicles 3:1** (KJV) "Then Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where the Lord appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshingfloor of Ornan the Jebusite."

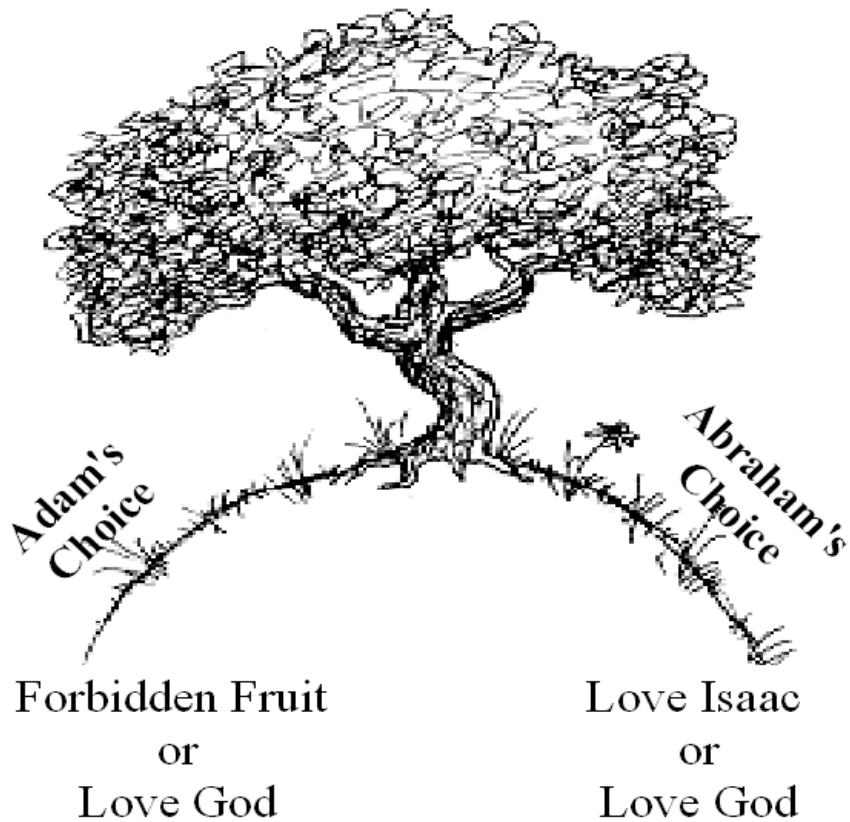
Genesis 22:12 (KJV) "And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God¹⁷, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

Abraham's willingness to *love God above everything else* became the foundation on which God built the Abrahamic Covenant, that fantastic Covenant that God *made in His own Name*:

Genesis 22:16-18 (KJV) "And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: {17} That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; {18} And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice."

The Abrahamic Covenant, in fact, became the *foundation* on which the Cross of Calvary¹⁸ was placed. We read "**in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice**". Everything in this life is either a tool or an idol. Love God first and foremost, and you and your children are blessed, just like Abraham and his seed were blessed. Turn the *tool* into an idol, be it children, job, food, or even life itself, and *reap the rewards of death*. This is the lesson that Adam and Abraham left for us who love the Lord.

¹⁷ Elohiym, the first given name of God in Scripture. See **Genesis 1:1**
¹⁸ see **Luke 23:33**



Adam chose to love *the tool* greater than he loved Elohiym, and in so doing *turned to idolatry*. Idolatry in turn led to *immediate spiritual death*, as the Scripture says:

1 Corinthians 15:22 (KJV) "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

When the tool becomes the idol, this is the taproot of death. Abraham, on the other hand, surrendered the *tool of the promise of the Covenant* to God because he loved God more than he loved Isaac. As it is written, "**in Christ shall all be made alive**". This was the lesson that

the Mosaic Law *hammered* into Israel: will you love God *more*, or will you love the tool? To love God *more* is to *be given life*. God told Israel in the clearest terms:

Deuteronomy 30:17-20 (KJV) "... if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods¹⁹, and serve them; {18} I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. {19} I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: {20} That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them."

If you turn away from God, turning *the tool* that should be used to worship and love Elohiym into an *idol*, then "**ye shall surely perish**". Hear, O Israel, the YHWH thy Elohiym is one YHWH! If you turn from the one True Elohiym to **other elohiym**¹⁹, then you have chosen the same pathway of death that Adam chose. Have you ever wondered about the rising cost of health care in America? Why do you think this is? Some people site the increased cost of medicines, whereas others believe the culprit is either doctors who love money, or lawyers who sue the doctors. Very few people examine the root

¹⁹ Elohiym, the first given name of God in Scripture. See Genesis 1:1

cause of sickness, disease, and death, and come to the conclusion that the Bible puts before us today: the YHWH our Elohiym is one YHWH. If you choose to worship and love Him you choose life. If you choose to idolize anything that He in Grace has given you, then you cling to and choose death.

2. Phariseism and Idolatry Present A False Idea Of What God Wants

FOCAL Deuteronomy 6:5 (KJV) "... thou shalt love the LORD²⁰ thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Matthew 22:37-40 (KJV) "Jesus said unto him, 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 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." (see also Mark 12:30-31;

What does God want of His children? The Shema tells us that He wants us to *love Him with all our heart, all our soul, and all our might*. Is loving God *mere ritualism*, or is it something else? I submit to you that God *demand*s a *growing and loving relationship* with His children. God is no different than any good Father - well, yes, of course He's sinless, but God like any earthly father wants to spend time with His children. He wants to see them succeed at doing things which *honor Him*. No parent ever stands up in a courtroom and points to a child in

chains before a judge and says "**There's my boy! I'm so proud of him!**" God wants to be proud of you, if you are His by faith in Christ. He wants to have a *living, growing relationship* with you. Beloved, mark this well: EVERYTHING in life that happens to you or around you is an opportunity to grow in Grace and in the knowledge of your Heavenly Father.

Knowledge of God is only gained *by loving Him fervently with all that you have*. Mere ritualism cannot bring you close to God. Christianity is *not* merely mechanical, just studying the Law or just studying the Word. God is love, and everything He has given to you is given from this basic truth - that God is love!

When the Lord Jesus Christ came to earth to walk among the children of men, He moved among a people who should have understood love of God. After all, God had given the Shema to Israel many years before. Yet this was not the case. God's first chosen still remained idolatrous, though their idolatry was a strange sort of worship. Given the religious system of Judaism, complete with its restrictive laws and ritualism. Israel was supposed to be led to a desire for the Savior. This was not the case. Many in Israel had begun to idolize *the Law itself*, cherishing its rituals and rigidity over a living and loving relationship with the Giver of the Law.

Is "**Loving the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind**" merely a function of ritualism? In Matthew chapter 23 our Lord used a series of statements, all introduced by the phrase **woe unto you**, as He justly *condemned* the Pharisees, the

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chief offenders against God's Shema, His command to love.

a. The Woe Of Stumbling & Idolatry

Matthew 23:13 (KJV) "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites²¹! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

The Pharisees had taken the Law of God, a tool designed to bring mankind under the conviction of sin, and had turned the tool into an idol. By their *play acting* at being saved and their rigid presentation of what God really wanted, they had caused many to believe that *they could never be saved*.

When I was a young man I was much fatter and shorter than I am now. Because of my weight I just hated going to gym class for our daily *physical education*. What I particularly hated was the pole vault and the hurdles. So many of those in the class made going over those bars look so easy, but every time I tried I failed. In my mind those horizontal poles were impossible to reach. Because

²¹ **Robertson's Word Pictures:** Hypocrites (hupokritai). This terrible word of Jesus appears first from him in the Sermon on the Mount (Mat 6:2, Mat 6:5, Mat 6:16; Mat 7:5), then in Mat 15:7 and Mat 22:18. Here it appears "with terrific iteration" (Bruce) save in the third of the seven woes (Mat 23:13, Mat 23:15, Mat 23:23, Mat 23:25, Mat 23:27, Mat 23:29). The verb in the active (hupokrinō) meant to separate slowly or slightly subject to gradual inquiry. Then the middle was to make answer, to take up a part on the stage, to act a part. It was an easy step to mean to feign, to pretend, to wear a masque, to act the hypocrite, to play a part. This hardest word from the lips of Jesus falls on those who were the religious leaders of the Jews (Scribes and Pharisees), who had justified this thunderbolt of wrath by their conduct toward Jesus and their treatment of things high and holy.

I believe it impossible, it was impossible, and I never tried as hard as I could have tried.

The Pharisees had publicly equated *loving God* with *worshipping the Law of God*. Yet God in His Law *never* demanded that you pass a certain hurdle in order to be saved. Salvation has and will always be *by faith alone in Christ alone*. What saith the Scripture? Did God, in giving the Law, want Israel to worship the *created law* and not the Creator of the Law? Listen to YHWH Elohiym and His judgment:

Deuteronomy 32:18-21 (KJV) "Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. {19} And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters. {20} And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. {21} They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; **I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation."**

Listen Beloved: the Christian *strives to serve God* not to *be saved*, but *because he has been saved by faith*. The love of God saves us, and because we understand that we love Him Who first loved us. The Pharisees, *perfect keepers of the Law*, are *unacceptable* to God because *they love the Law but not the Giver of the Law*.

b. The Woe of Pretended Relationship With God

FOCAL Deuteronomy 6:5 (KJV) "... thou shalt love the LORD²² thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Matthew 23:14 (KJV) "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation."

Those who have a relationship with God by faith in Christ understand that the *natural outworking* of the Shema is *love toward others*. God is love²³. If God is love, and you *love God with all your heart, soul, and might*, then you will love others as well. You cannot say that you love God and yet show no love toward others. You cannot say that you love God and yet **devour widow's houses**. The Bible says:

1 John 4:20-21 (KJV) "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? {21} And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also."

Prayer to God is *communication with God*, and you cannot communicate with God and be filled with every evil work.

c. The Woe of Preaching a False Gospel

²² YHWH thy Elohiym, the Eternal Triune God

²³ see **1 John 4:8**

FOCAL Deuteronomy 6:5 (KJV) "... thou shalt love the LORD²⁴ thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Matthew 23:15 (KJV) "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves."

The heart of salvation is to *love God with all you have*, to use everything in this life as a tool to show love toward God. The Pharisees were *very diligent* in seeking converts, but the converts they sought were not to Christ but to Phariseeism. They preached a false gospel that could not save. The Law could not save:

Hebrews 10:1-4 (KJV) "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. {2} For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. {3} But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. {4} For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

Following the Law had *absolutely no saving value*! By falsely converting people to a false gospel they were (1) assured of salvation when they were not truly saved, and

²⁴ YHWH thy Elohiym, the Eternal Triune God

(2) blinded to the true Gospel which preaches faith alone in Christ alone (John 14:6).

d. The Woe of the Fruit of a False Gospel

FOCAL Deuteronomy 6:5 (KJV) "... thou shalt love the LORD²⁵ thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Matthew 23:16 (KJV) "Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!"

The problem with following a false Gospel or a false god is that you never see what the YHWH Elohiym really wants. The Pharisee, never saved but cloaked in the aura of salvation, considered the **gold of the Temple**, that is, the golden implements of worship in the Temple, more important than the *Inhabiter of the Temple*, YHWH Elohiym Himself. It was not the Temple, nor the implements of the Law contained in the Temple that saved - but it was the *precious Blood of Christ* offered on Calvary that bought our salvation:

Hebrews 9:11-12 (KJV) "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; {12} **Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.**"

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e. The Woe of Worshiping the Symbol Rather Than The Reality

FOCAL Deuteronomy 6:5 (KJV) "... thou shalt love the LORD²⁶ thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Matthew 23:23-24 (KJV) "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. {24} Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel."

By making salvation into mere ritualism the Pharisee was guilty of worshiping the symbol of righteousness instead of the reality of righteousness. The Pharisee was *faithful to tithe*, to give ten percent of their income to the Temple as the Law required, yet they "**omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith**". Mere obedience to the ritual without *love toward the Creator of the ritual* has no value whatsoever. The symbol rather than the reality was being worshiped, and this was very offensive to God.

When I was in the Air Force stationed in Korea back in the late 80's I had to leave my wife and children in the United States. The area I was in was a dangerous place to be, and it was certainly no place for my family. Every night before I went to bed I kissed a picture of my wife I

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kept on the nightstand next to my bed. I did that every night for 365 days until the good Lord brought me home. When I got home I stopped kissing the picture, and started kissing my wife. The picture was a mere symbol of my love: now my love was in my presense.

The Pharisee, divorced from God and worshipping the Law, spent his time *kissing the picture of God* rather than *kissing God*. The life of the believer should be characterized by *kissing the Son*, being obedient to Christ and His leading because we love Him. As the Scripture says:

Psalms 2:12 (KJV) "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

An unbeliever may be able to read the Bible, memorize Scripture, pray publicly, take the Lord's Table, and even be baptized. Unbelievers can do all the things that believers do! But an unbeliever *cannot love God* for God is love and God is not in the unbeliever. Jesus told the Pharisees:

John 8:42-44 (KJV) "Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. {43} Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. {44} Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there

is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."

The test as to where you are in God is *whether* you love the symbol, or whether you love the Reality. If you love the reality and can do as the Shema requires, then God is in you and you are in God. Merely making the outside of the body *look good* is not enough. Hear the last of Jesus' harsh words:

Matthew 23:25-33 (KJV) "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. {26} Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. {27} Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. {28} Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. {29} Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchers of the righteous, {30} And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. {31} Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. {32} Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. {33} Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

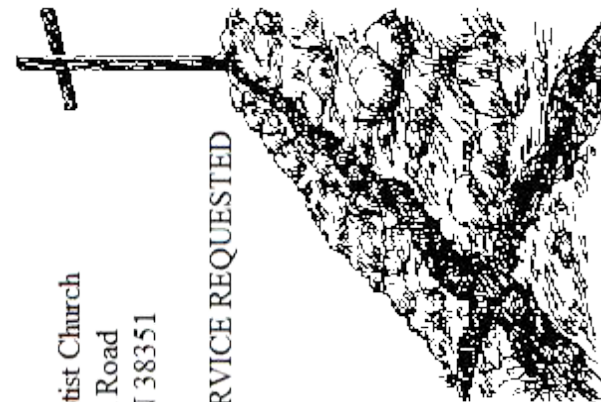
What vivid language our Lord used! What harsh language our Lord used! Yet Beloved, do not think that His Words do not come from a heart of love. Jesus abhorred the fact that the Pharisees had taken the Law, God's tool to lead Israel to salvation by faith in Him, and had turned that schoolmaster into an idol to be worshiped. How many die and enter into eternal damnation today because those who *profess* Christ but *have no relationship by faith* in Him have, like the Pharisees, given many a wrong idea of what God's requirements are.

God does not require nor does He want mere ritualism or mere obedience. He does not just want your performance. He wants your love! He wants what the Shema states:

FOCAL Deuteronomy 6:5 (KJV) "... thou shalt love the LORD²⁷ thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Love of this type and of this fervency drives out all *lesser loves*. Love of this type is *supernatural* and can only be supplied by those who know Jesus Christ as both Lord and Savior.

May God touch your hearts with these words.



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

²⁷ YHWH thy Elohiym, the Eternal Triune God