

Samaritan Love – Part 1

Hatred is a sin. It causes the believer to break fellowship with God. The remedy is to recognize sin and acknowledge it is wrong. Go back to faith dependence on God the Holy Spirit. This produces love, divine love.

You have heard this multiple times by now. At this point, you are ready to hear something about love. Jesus tells us a story of love in the book of Luke. Usually, this narrative is called the story of the Good Samaritan. I much prefer “Samaritan Love.”

We must agree that the New Testament, in the original Greek, is inerrant. Everything doctor Luke wrote down is correct and an accurate depiction of events he narrates.

Often in the New Testament, Jesus is challenged in His teaching. Religious people challenge Him because His teachings differ from their understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures. So today, we travel to the book of Luke, a destination we have not visited very often.

I have thought of the book of Luke as “historical.” History is not dry if taught correctly. Luke, an associate of the apostle Paul, provides keen insight into Jesus’ ministry. Jesus was an expert debater. This passage demonstrates that fact.

Luke 10:25 And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

And. The first word in the sentence is “and.” It is both a continuation of the previous text and a break from it.

Behold! You didn’t see that in the NASB. It is in the Greek text. The King James Version is closer to the literal text. As you know, I don’t

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particularly like the word “behold.” This word is to get your attention. This word is an instruction to you the reader. It is an aorist imperative. The NASB and the NIV and other translations leave it out of the translation all together. However, as an instruction to the reader it is important. In this context, I would prefer something like, “Now pay attention and concentrate!”

It is like a mother chastising a daughter that has done something unbecoming. The daughter is fidgeting with her clothes, not looking at the mother, hoping the mother will stop talking soon. But the mother shouts at the daughter, “Look at me!” That is the force of this “behold.”

Now, look again at this word from another perspective. Besides being a imperative used as a demonstrative particle to get your attention, it plays nicely into the narrative. It is a verb. It is from the Greek verb “horao,” to see. Here it is an aorist active imperative. But... “horao” is a key verb in the parable that follows. Each of the passersby “see” the wounded man by the side of the road. It is in each case an aorist active participle. They each did the same thing. They observed. But the first use of the verb, “behold,” brings the reader into the narrative. It surreptitiously asks the reader to observe just like the passersby. What would you do in this situation?

Lawyer. The word is translated correctly, “lawyer.” Here is a challenge to the Western reader today. This is not your ordinary criminal or civil defense lawyer. In this context, this is a legal scholar of the Mosaic Law. Remember, Jewish oral and written tradition and legal opinions dominate the thinking of the religious crowd. Only the most erudite of the religious crowd were allowed to provide interpretations. But the Torah is the Law governing Jewish behavior.

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Uh OH! **Lawyer**. With that word introduced by Luke, we are now in a legal setting. If combined with other words, this could take us to the Angelic Conflict. The appeal trial of Satan.

Certain. There is a word for this in the Greek text. It identifies “someone.”

Put Him to the test. This is a word that can mean to tempt or to test. This is part of the narrative by Luke. Some say that this word shows no hostility was intended by the lawyer. But, Jesus uses this word to respond to the Devil’s testing of Him in the desert at the beginning of His ministry. Earlier in Luke:

Luke 4:12 And Jesus answered and said to him, “It is said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.’” (quote from Deuteronomy 6:16)

Deuteronomy 6:16 “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested *Him* at Massah.

So, put together, a religious legal setting plus a word that described the Devil’s actions against Jesus in the desert and we have now entered the Angelic Conflict zone.

When I grow up and become an old man, if I have time, I would like to study and write on the Angelic Conflict in the gospels. It would make for fascinating reading.

Assume this to be true, that this word means to test as a challenge. The Mosaic law said, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” So, the Mosaic Law lawyer is already violating the Law without realizing it.

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He is doing the same thing that the Devil did in Luke chapter 4. **Strike one.**

Dr. Luke is a crafty writer. By using this word he identified Jesus' opposition in this narrative.

Stood up. Look at Luke's choice of vocabulary, so far. Lawyer (of the Mosaic Law), Testing (verb used of the Devil's testing of Jesus) and now "stand up." This word is often used of standing up as in a crowd to speak. Like the Hebrew, some verbs come in pairs. This is one. People stand up to do something.

For example:

Luke 4:16 And He (Jesus) came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.

Standing up is a preparation for the next verbal action.

There is no "and." The testing characterizes the standing, its purpose. The lawyer had a purpose in standing up. It was to put Jesus to the test similar to the way the Devil did in the desert.

In the Angelic Conflict, it appears that the Devil uses many people, including this lawyer, as defense lawyers in his appeal trial. The Devil doesn't just use Angels in the Angelic Conflict, but he enlists unsuspecting unbelievers and even believers to further his claims. Jesus uses each and every believer as an exhibit in the Angelic Conflict. The Devil has been attempting to poke holes in God's case against him. But he has never found a hole and never will. He keeps asking, "What about..." Jesus can just point to the cross. "It is finished."

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We know from the Bible that in the end the Devil loses and goes to the Lake of Fire. It is made for him. Yet, he keeps trying to find a way to escape God's verdict. The Devil tries to "impeach" God's work, finding some flaw. But to no avail.

Have you ever lost a credit card while shopping? You are 99% sure you lost it at the store. Yet, when you get home and discover your loss, you tear up the house, look in the garage and in the car hoping that maybe you lost it somewhere other than the store.

So the Devil. He knows he is going to the Lake of Fire. But the appeal trial allows him to see why a loving God can send one of His creations to the Lake of Fire. Yet, he is hoping there is some way he might have missed of escaping this verdict.

What shall I do. This implicitly assumes that eternal life is "inherited" by doing something.

Inherit eternal life. We read this from a 21st century Christian perspective. But Jesus and the lawyer were in the dispensation of the Law. The culture depicted in these words is different than we might interpret them. Listen to the words of Robby Dean:

"We looked at the parable of the good Samaritan. And this is so important. This is one of those passages that is often misunderstood because you don't go back and look at the original quotations, the context of these Old Testament quotations to understand what is going on here. And many people think that when this lawyer comes and says, "Teacher what do I do to inherit eternal life?" they think he is asking how do I get saved and spend eternity in heaven? And he is not asking that. In many places the idea of inheriting eternal life is more than simply going to heaven and living eternally with God. It has a qualitative aspect to it. And the idea of inheritance is of possession of something. And so it is

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when Jesus came in John 10. He says, “I didn’t come like the thief to steal and destroy but I came to give life and to give life abundantly. So what we see here is that is really what this lawyer is asking, “How do I have this fullness of eternal life?” Now we have to understand that in terms of the Old Testament, the framework that he is coming to Jesus with. This isn’t the Church Age question and answer session. This is under the Mosaic Law. So this is still, it has to be understood under the promises God gave in the Mosaic Law. So Jesus’ question back is “What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?” So this guy is a lawyer. He is a specialist in the Torah. Jesus said, “OK, How do you understand the Torah about this?” And the lawyer says, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your strength and all your mind and your neighbor as yourself.” So this is a quote from Deuteronomy 6:5. And that is... just the same thing. Love the Lord your God with all your heart with all your soul with all your strength. In Luke 10:28, Jesus says to him, “You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live.” Now a lot of people will say, “Well, you know that Jesus is really saying that he can’t really do that.” But that isn’t what the text says. You have to understand the Old Testament background here. ...Deuteronomy 6:5 is the first part that I just quoted. And then Leviticus 19:18 states that “You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the children of your people but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” So it is the last part that is quoted. And so when Jesus says, “You have answered correctly, do this and you will live, Jesus is taking us to an earlier part to Leviticus 18 in verses 4 and 5 where God says “You shall observe my judgments and keep my ordinances. This isn’t about salvation because when He is talking to the Exodus generation almost all of them were saved. Maybe all of them were saved but at least almost all of them were saved. We know that from the way they are described during the period of the Exodus. So God is telling these saved people something about how to live. And He says

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“Observe my judgments keep my ordinances to walk in them I am the Lord your God. Keep the statutes and ordinances. A person will live if he does them. Now that is a promise within the Mosaic Law. If you obey the Law, you will live. And what that is talking about is the generation that is observing the Mosaic Law is going to be blessed by God. That is the first part of Leviticus 18 which goes on in the first 12 verses, I think, it’s talking about the blessing for the obedient ones. And if they are disobedient the rest of the chapter is the five cycles of divine discipline. So keep my statutes and ordinances and a person will live. That is an abundance of life. That is not just biologically alive. Because those were Israelites that we studied under the oppression of the Canaanites under Deborah under the oppression of the Midianites before Gideon delivered them and those we are studying now, chapter 11 of Judges, the oppression of the Ammonites, they were alive but they were not living. They were under oppression from these foreign powers. So this promise is in Leviticus 18:4-5. If you are obedient to Me you are going to experience a full abundant life and I’ll be bringing blessing upon the nation. But if you disobey Me it’s not going to be much of a life worth living. You are going to be under oppression and you are going to be under judgment. So that is basically what we learned from that.¹”

Luke 10:26 And He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?”

Jesus throws the question back at the lawyer. Rather than show off His knowledge of the text of the Torah, Jesus forces the lawyer to show off his ignorance.

Let me comment on Jesus. He is the smartest genius that ever was and still is. And He had no sin nature and had the indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit. Every word He uttered, every sentence He spoke was

¹ <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/philippians/message/19-the-description-of-love-b/listen>

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perfectly crafted. And Luke perfectly translates from Aramaic or Hebrew, whatever language Jesus used to converse with this lawyer.

Jesus asks two questions. The first is “What is written.” This is a reference to Scripture, specifically the Torah. The second is essentially asking, “How do you interpret that?” The first question is easy to answer. Just quote the appropriate Scripture. The lawyer will know that. But the second question is a bit tricky.

The word “read” means just that. But in this context, Jesus is not asking the lawyer to read it. He is asking “how” he reads it. He is asking for an interpretation.

Luke 10:27 And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”

Has the lawyer answered both questions? He has quoted from two separate passages: Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. Seemingly the lawyer only answers the first question making the assumption that the meaning is clear and needs no further explanation. Here is something to consider. Does the lawyer interpret the first quote from Deuteronomy by quoting from Leviticus? Is he saying the second quote about loving your neighbor is a demonstration, an interpretation of what it means to love God? Remember James’ saying that don’t tell me you have faith, show me you have faith. So loving your neighbor could be interpreted as showing that you love God. The lawyer is an expert in the Law but also an expert on how to “spin” it. Jesus is an expert in the Law but He knows exactly what it means in a divine spiritual context.

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But the lawyer by calling Jesus “teacher” is not recognizing Jesus’ as Messiah and as God. Robby Dean suggested that when quoting an Old Testament passage, it is advisable for the reader to look up the context it was taken from. He went back to Leviticus to show the context of loving your neighbor. Here we want to look at the context of loving the Lord your God. It might put things in better perspective if we look at the context of Deuteronomy 6:5. It follows Deuteronomy 6:4. “Daahh, you say.” But what is Deuteronomy 6:4? It is the “Shema.” It has a name because it was and still is a very important passage in the Torah for the Jews.

Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. (This is the “Shema” which comes from the first word in this verse, “Hear.”)

Deuteronomy 6:5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Deuteronomy 6:4 contains the “Shema.” It is a verse that orthodox Jews recite daily. They are very familiar with this part of the Torah.

Listen to what a Jewish commentator of Deuteronomy says about the Shema:

“The position of this paragraph in Deuteronomy lends it special significance. As the first paragraph of the Instruction that God gave Moses on Mount Sinai it is, in a sense, the beginning of Deuteronomy proper. It concisely states the central themes of the book and the central demands of the covenant, paraphrasing the first commandment and explicating its meaning: Israel's love and loyalty to YHVH must be undivided and accompanied by constant efforts to remember His instructions and teach them to future generations. The significance of this

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paragraph is reflected in the fact that it became the centerpiece of Jewish daily worship, the Keri'at Shema ("Recitation of the Shema"), named for its first word (see Excursus 10). Its significance is underscored in the Nash Papyrus and the Septuagint which preface it with an extra introductory verse, "These are the laws and the rules that Moses [Septuagint: the LORD] commanded Israel in the desert when they left Egypt."²

So it is obvious that the lawyer and Jesus could easily agree that this was the center of the Jewish religion.

By not recognizing Jesus as Messiah and God and not worshiping Him, the lawyer has already failed his own criteria that he gleaned from the Law. **Strike two.**

Luke 10:28 And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live.”

Jesus said that if the lawyer complies with the Scriptural promises he quoted, “you will live.” He did not repeat the lawyer’s “eternal life.” It reminds me of the response of Jesus to the man on the cross that asked Jesus to remember him in His Kingdom. Jesus responded that the man would be in paradise.

Luke 23:42 And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!”

Luke 23:43 And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

² Tigay, J.H. (1996). The JPS Torah commentary : the traditional Hebrew text with the new JPS translation. Deuteronomy: [Devarim]. Philadelphia, Pa.: Jewish Publication Society. Page 76

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So here, the physical abundant life is possible if the lawyer abides by Scriptural promises. We know that there is a missing word in all this: faith. Just as in Romans chapter 2, the word for faith is missing. Biblical promises must be mixed with faith (Hebrews 4:1-2).

Luke 10:29 But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Justify. Luke is doctor Luke to the apostle Paul. As such, he is likely very familiar with Paul’s theological vocabulary. Perhaps there is a play on words here. The lawyer wishes to justify himself before Jesus yet the lawyer cannot be justified eternally apart from faith in Jesus the Messiah. The lawyer is thinking in physical terms while Jesus thinks in spiritual terms. Theologically, “justify” means a person has been imputed with God’s righteousness. But this comes by faith and not “doing” anything.

And now we get to the good stuff, the parable of Samaritan Love.

Luke 10:30 Jesus replied and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him half dead (Note He says half dead. I think this is important in the understanding of the various responses that follow).

Replied. The Greek word is not the word I expected to see based upon the English translation. It is not really the word normally used for “replied” in a question and answer session. This literally means to take up. So here, Jesus takes up or continues the discussion with a parable which illustrates who the neighbor is.

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There is a sense in which this reminds me of a scene from the Jack Reacher movie. Some young men challenge Jack Reacher to a fight. Just before the first punch is thrown, Jack Reacher faces his first challenger and says, “Remember, You wanted this!” So Jesus takes up the challenge knowing He will win the argument when the lawyer capitulates. Jesus could have said, “Remember, You wanted this!”

Helpful comments from Thomas Constable:

“The 17-mile desert road that descended about 3,300 feet from Jerusalem to Jericho was treacherous, winding, and a favorite haunt of robbers. Clothing was a valuable commodity in Jesus' society, and this fact probably explains why the bandits took the man's clothes. Perhaps the man resisted his attackers, which would have been a common reaction, and suffered a near fatal beating.³”

Each word in this narrative is important. This lesson does not highlight each and every word, but as the Holy Spirit reveals them, I write them down. One of those is the city of Jericho. What did Jesus pick the Jerusalem to Jericho road. In answer to prayer, the following information is provided.

“The history of Second Temple period Jericho was to a great extent the history of "priestly" Jericho. The fertility of the Jericho region as well as its administrative (sp. administrative) importance apparently attracted a large priestly population to the site rather early during the Second Temple period. The priestly population of Jericho grew when the area was further developed by the Hasmoneans who built royal estates there.”

“Talmudic tradition also refers to a large priestly settlement. According to the rabbis, a priestly course would be divided in halves: one half would go up to Jerusalem to officiate in the Temple while the other half of the course would go to Jericho to arrange supplies for their brethren

³ <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/luke.pdf> page 134

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serving in the Temple. It is my contention that this reflects Hasmonean policy attempting to regulate and control priestly pre-rogatives. The large priestly population of Jericho is also verified by the numerous ritual baths discovered there.⁴”

So, the point is to indicate that this road was highly traveled by Jewish priests.

“The man in view may have been a real person and the incident Jesus described could have really happened. Yet the fact that Jesus told this story as He did, similar to other parables, has led most students of the passage to conclude that He invented it to teach a lesson.⁵”

Whether it was a true story or a parable is not important. But please understand that each and every word is carefully chosen to highlight the love difference between the Samaritan and the priest and Levite.

A certain man coming down from Jerusalem is assumed to be a Jew. Certainly the lawyer would assume this. This factors into the thinking of the Jewish lawyer. A Jew would be considered his neighbor. He would hate a Samaritan. But Jesus did not specify the victim’s background. He is just some man. Any man.

Remember, the man’s clothes were stolen, so he is naked. Likely face down in the dirt. So whether he is circumcised or not is hidden.

The point is that it is a scenario Jesus used to force the Mosaic Law lawyer to answer his own question. It is genius on display. Rather than display His superior knowledge of Scriptures and put the lawyer to shame, Jesus causes him to answer his own question. And answer his question differently than they way it was intended to be answered.

4 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1454416>, Schwartz, Bar Ilan Univeristy, "On Priests and Jericho in the Second Temple Period" in the Jewish Quarterly Review, LXXIX, No. 1 (July, 1988)23-48

5 <https://planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/pdf/luke.pdf> page 134