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Καὶ προσελθὼν εἷς τῶν γραμματέων ἀκούσας αὐτῶν συζητούντων, ἰδὼν ὅτι καλῶς ἀπεκρίθη αὐτοῖς ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτόν·

ποία ἐστὶν ἐντολὴ πρώτη πάντων;

^{NASB} One of the scribes came and heard them arguing, and recognizing that He had answered them well, asked Him,

“What commandment is the foremost of all?”

^{KJV} And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him,

Which is the first commandment of all?

^{ESV} And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him,

“Which commandment is the most important of all?”

^{NRS} One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him,

“Which commandment is the first of all?”

^{NET} Now one of the experts in the law came and heard them debating. When he saw that Jesus answered them well, he asked him,

“Which commandment is the most important of all?”

^{NIV} One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him,

“Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

^{NJB} One of the scribes who had listened to them debating appreciated that Jesus had given a good answer and put a further question to him,

‘Which is the first of all the commandments?’

^{CEB} One of the legal experts heard their dispute and saw how well Jesus answered them. He came over and asked him,

“Which commandment is the most important of all?”

^{NLT} One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked,

“Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

^{MSG} One of the religion scholars came up. Hearing the lively exchanges of question and answer and seeing how sharp Jesus was in his answers, he put in his question: “Which is most important of all the commandments?”

^{MGVH} And one of the experts in the Mosaic Law approached and heard *Jesus and the Sadducees* disputing, and when he saw how well Jesus answered them, he asked him, “Which commandment is most important of *them* all?”

- A γραμματεὺς is more than a scribe, copyist. They were the experts in the content and interpretation of the Torah. In this incident, note that the legal expert is joining a discussion Jesus was having with the Sadducees. It seems that more of the legal experts were connected with the Pharisees than Sadducees, and that seems to be the case here since he thinks that Jesus has answered well (and refuted) the Sadducees.

ἀπεκρίθη ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι πρώτη ἐστὶν· ἄκουε, Ἰσραήλ, κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστίν,

^{NASB} Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD;

^{KJV} And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:

^{ESV} Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

^{NRS} Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;

^{NET} Jesus answered, “The most important is: ‘Listen, Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

^{NIV} “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

^{NJB} Jesus replied, ‘This is the first: Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one, only Lord,

^{CEB} Jesus replied, “The most important one is Israel, listen! Our God is the one Lord,

^{NLT} Jesus replied, “The most important commandment is this: ‘Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only LORD.

^{MSG} Jesus said, “The first in importance is, “Listen, Israel: The Lord your God is one;

^{MGVH} Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is *the only* one.

- πρώτη is “first,” but here it has the sense of “most important.” (But see v31 where Jesus cites a “second” command.)
- ἄκουε > Hear, Listen: I think the KJV tradition and its successors has established “Hear, O Israel...” as the traditional translation.
- Note the various ways the quotation from Deuteronomy 6.4 is rendered. (The quote does exactly cite the LXX.) Some other possible ways of translating this looking to the Hebrew:
 - Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. (JPS citing Rashbam and Ibn Ezra)
 - Harken, O Israel: YHWH our God, YHWH is One! (Schocken)
 - Hear, Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. (Alter)

Considering the Greek possibilities, perhaps:

- Listen, Israel: Our God *is* the Lord. The Lord is one. (This reflects that θεὸς is articular, and κύριος is not.)
- Hear, Israel: Our Lord God, the Lord is one.
- Hear, Israel: The Lord our God, *this* Lord is *the* one.
- Hear, Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

The question is whether the emphasis is on God or Lord. My sense is that this saying in Deuteronomy is not focused on monotheism (one God) but on asserting that Israel’s God is the one that is the Lord alone.

καὶ ἀγαπήσεις κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος σου.

^{NASB} AND 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.'

^{KJV} And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.

^{ESV} And 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.'

^{NRS} 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.'

^{NET} Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.'

^{NIV} Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.'

^{NJB} and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.

^{CEB} and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

^{NLT} And you must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.'

^{MSG} so love the Lord God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy.'

^{MGVH} and you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart, and from your whole being, and from your whole mind, and from your whole strength.'

- The quote from Deuteronomy 6.4 in the previous verse is continued here with Deuteronomy 6.5, but it is not exactly following the LXX: καὶ ἀγαπήσεις Κύριον τὸν θεόν σου ἐξ ὅλης τῆς διανοίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς δυνάμεώς σου. “And you shall love the Lord your God from your whole mind and from your whole being and from your whole might.”
- ἀγαπήσεις is a future indicative. Especially when quoting the LXX, the future indicative functions as an imperatival future. NET, NIV, and MSG render as a simple command. NJB, CEB, and NLT use “must.”
- ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου... The English idiom used “with your whole heart,” but ἐξ is really expressing origin > “from out of your whole heart.”
- ψυχή is regularly translated with “soul,” but I suspect that most people hear that as some ethereal aspect of one’s self in contrast to one’s body. I think one’s “being” is a better way of rendering it here.
- διανοία refers to one’s understanding, comprehension, intelligence. “Mind” is a convenient shorthand useful in translation.

δευτέρα αὕτη· ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν. μείζων τούτων ἄλλη ἐντολὴ οὐκ ἔστιν.

^{NASB} “The second is this, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

^{KJV} And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

^{ESV} The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

^{NRS} The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

^{NET} The second is: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

^{NIV} The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

^{NJB} The second is this: You must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.’

^{CEB} The second is this, You will love your neighbor as yourself. No other commandment is greater than these.”

^{NLT} The second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.”

^{MSG} And here is the second: “Love others as well as you love yourself.’ There is no other commandment that ranks with these.”

^{MGVH} The second *most important* is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other greater commandment than these.”

- “The second...”: The legal expert only asked for the most important (using *πρῶτος*) command, but Jesus ends up giving two. (If one translated *πρῶτος* with “most important” in v 28, then “second most important” is reasonable here.)
- The quotation here is of Leviticus 19.18, accurately citing the LXX.

Καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ὁ γραμματεὺς· καλῶς, διδάσκαλε, ἐπ' ἀληθείας εἶπες ὅτι εἷς ἐστὶν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλος πλὴν αὐτοῦ·

^{NASB} The scribe said to Him, “Right, Teacher; You have truly stated that HE IS ONE, AND THERE IS NO ONE ELSE BESIDES HIM;

^{KJV} And the scribe said unto him, Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but he:

^{ESV} And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him.

^{NRS} Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’;

^{NET} The expert in the law said to him, “That is true, Teacher; you are right to say that he is one, and there is no one else besides him.

^{NIV} “Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him.

^{NJB} The scribe said to him, ‘Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true, that he is one and there is no other.

^{CEB} The legal expert said to him, “Well said, Teacher. You have truthfully said that God is one and there is no other besides him.

^{NLT} The teacher of religious law replied, “Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth by saying that there is only one God and no other.

^{MSG} The religion scholar said, “A wonderful answer, Teacher! So lucid and accurate-- that God is one and there is no other.

^{MGVH} And the expert in the Law said to him, “Good answer, Teacher! You have spoken truthfully that *God is the only* one, and there is no other besides God,

- Compare to what Jesus said in v29. The reference is still to Deuteronomy 6.4.
- εἶπες is an aorist indicative but a completed sense seems natural here: “have spoken, said”
- To avoid using the masculine pronoun to refer to God, one can choose either to repeat “God” or perhaps use the generic third plural “them.”

καὶ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν αὐτὸν ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς συνέσεως καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ἰσχύος καὶ τὸ ἀγαπᾶν τὸν πλησίον ὡς ἑαυτὸν περισσότερόν ἐστιν πάντων τῶν ὀλοκαυτωμάτων καὶ θυσιῶν.

^{NASB} AND TO LOVE HIM WITH ALL THE HEART AND WITH ALL THE UNDERSTANDING AND WITH ALL THE STRENGTH, AND TO LOVE ONE'S NEIGHBOR AS HIMSELF, is much more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

^{KJV} And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.

^{ESV} And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

^{NRS} and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'-- this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

^{NET} And to love him with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

^{NIV} To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

^{NJB} To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself, this is far more important than any burnt offering or sacrifice.’

^{CEB} And to love God with all of the heart, a full understanding, and all of one's strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself is much more important than all kinds of entirely burned offerings and sacrifices.”

^{NLT} And I know it is important to love him with all my heart and all my understanding and all my strength, and to love my neighbor as myself. This is more important than to offer all of the burnt offerings and sacrifices required in the law.”

^{MSG} And loving him with all passion and intelligence and energy, and loving others as well as you love yourself. Why, that's better than all offerings and sacrifices put together!”

^{MGVH} and to be loving God from your whole heart, and from your whole understanding, and from your whole strength, and to be loving one's neighbor as oneself, *that* is much more than all the burned offerings and sacrifices.”

- Compare with verse 30, noting use of ἐξ and the slight changes. The reference is still the same to Deuteronomy 6.5, but it still is not an exact citation of the LXX. Leviticus 19.18 is here presented indirectly using an infinitive and 3rd person instead of future indicative and 2nd person.
- “Burned offerings” (in which the whole animal is burned) and “sacrifices” (other sacrifices performed on the altar) are mentioned together ~77 times in the LXX.

καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἰδὼν [αὐτὸν] ὅτι **νουνεχῶς** ἀπεκρίθη εἶπεν αὐτῷ· οὐ μακρὰν εἶ ἀπὸ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ. Καὶ οὐδεὶς οὐκέτι ἐτόλμα αὐτὸν ἐπερωτῆσαι.

^{NASB} When Jesus saw that he had answered **intelligently**, He said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that, no one would venture to ask Him any more questions.

^{KJV} And when Jesus saw that he answered **discreetly**, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God. And no man after that durst ask him any question.

^{ESV} And when Jesus saw that he answered **wisely**, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.

^{NRS} When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” After that no one dared to ask him any question.

^{NET} When Jesus saw that he had answered **thoughtfully**, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” Then no one dared any longer to question him.

^{NIV} When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

^{NJB} Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken, said, ‘You are not far from the kingdom of God.’ And after that no one dared to question him any more.

^{CEB} When Jesus saw that he had answered **with wisdom**, he said to him, “You aren’t far from God’s kingdom.” After that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

^{NLT} Realizing **how much the man understood**, Jesus said to him, “You are not far from the Kingdom of God.” And after that, no one dared to ask him any more questions.

^{MSG} When Jesus realized how **insightful** he was, he said, “You’re almost there, right on the border of God’s kingdom.” After that, no one else dared ask a question.

^{MGVH} And Jesus, when he saw that he answered thoughtfully, said to him, “You are not far from the dominion of God.” And after that, no one was daring to ask him *any more* questions.

- **νουνεχῶς** can be rendered in a variety of ways. The sense is of some kind of mindfulness that reflects wisdom or insight.
- “And after that / and no longer...”: It could be that no one dared in light of Jesus’ statement that the Law expert was near to the dominion of God, but it could also be a conclusion to the section that started in 11.27-12.12 when the Temple officials asked Jesus about his authority, 12.13-17 when the Pharisees and Herodians ask about paying taxes to the emperor, and 12.18-27 when the Sadducees ask about resurrection.
- Note that in the next verse, 12.35, Jesus asks a question! The disciples will ask about signs of the end times in 13.4. Of Jesus’ opponents, the next question put to Jesus will be by the high priest when he is being tried in Mark 14.60f.

Mark 12.28-34 mgvh translation

This reading is part of the gospel describing events starting with Jesus' memorable entry into Jerusalem on Sunday. On Monday he had driven out the merchants at the Temple, but he returned to the Temple on Tuesday to continue his teaching. The Temple officials ask about his authority. The Pharisees and Herodians try to get him in trouble by asking about paying taxes to the emperor. The Sadducees who say that there will be no resurrection ask him a trick question about it. Jesus successfully replies and refutes each of their questions...:

²⁸ And one of the experts in the Mosaic Law approached
and heard *Jesus and the Sadducees* disputing,
and when he saw how well Jesus answered them,
he asked him,

“Which commandment is most important of *them* all?”

²⁹ Jesus answered,

“The most important is,

‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is *the only* one.

³⁰ and you shall love the Lord your God

from your whole heart, and from your whole being, and from your whole mind, and from your whole strength.’

³¹ The second *most important* is this:

‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’

There is no other greater commandment than these.”

³² And the expert in the Law said to him,

“Good answer, Teacher!

You have spoken truthfully that

God is *the only* one,

and there is no other besides God,

³³ and to be loving God

from your whole heart, and from your whole understanding, and from your whole strength,

and to be loving one's neighbor

as oneself,

that is much more than all the burned offerings and sacrifices.”

³⁴ And Jesus, when he saw that he answered thoughtfully,
said to him,

“You are not far from the dominion of God.”

And after that, no one was daring to ask him *any more* questions.