

Mark 12:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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

Analysis

When asked which commandment is first, Jesus answered: 'The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord' (Πρώτη πάντων τῶν ἐντολῶν, Ἴσραήλ, Κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν Κύριος εἷς ἐστίν). Jesus quoted the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-5), Judaism's central confession. The declaration 'the Lord is one' (Kyrios heis, Κύριος εἷς) affirms monotheism—God is unique, singular, indivisible. This foundational truth grounds the greatest commandment (v. 30): love this one God supremely. Recognizing God's oneness demands exclusive devotion—no competing loyalties, divided hearts, or lesser gods. Christian theology developed Trinitarian monotheism—one God eternally existing as three persons (Father, Son, Spirit). The Shema doesn't contradict Trinity but establishes that there is one divine essence, not multiple gods.

Historical Context

The Shema (from Hebrew shema', 'hear') was (and is) Judaism's central prayer, recited twice daily. It appears in Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41. Faithful Jews recited it morning and evening, wore it in phylacteries (small boxes containing Scripture, Matthew 23:5), and affixed it to doorposts (mezuzah). The Shema distinguished Israel's monotheism from ancient Near Eastern polytheism. Jesus' citation as 'first commandment' emphasized its primacy. Early Christian debates over Jesus' deity had to reconcile Shema monotheism with Christ's divine worship. Orthodox theology developed Trinitarian doctrine: one God, three

persons. The Shema doesn't deny Trinity (Hebrew echad can mean 'composite unity,' as in Genesis 2:24, 'one flesh') but affirms singular divine essence.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does the Shema's declaration of God's oneness guard against idolatry and divided religious loyalties?
2. What does recognizing God as 'one Lord' demand regarding the totality and exclusivity of our devotion?

Interlinear Text

ὁ	δὲ	Ἰησοῦς	ἀπεκρίθη	αὐτῷ,	ὅτι	Πρώτη	πασῶν	τῶν
G3588	And	Jesus	answered	him	The	first	of all	G3588
	G1161	G2424	G611	G846	G3754	G4413	G3956	
ἐντολῶν,	Ἄκουε	Ἰσραήλ	κύριος	ὁ	θεὸς	ἡμῶν		
the commandments	is Hear	O Israel	Lord	G3588	God	our		
G1785	G191	G2474	G2962		G2316	G2257		
κύριος	εἷς	ἐστίν						
Lord	one	is						
G2962	G1520	G2076						

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 6:4 (References God): Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

Galatians 3:20 (References God): Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one.

Luke 10:27 (References God): And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

Romans 3:30 (References God): Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

1 Corinthians 8:4 (References God): As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.

James 2:19 (References God): Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble.

Jude 1:25 (References God): To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

1 Timothy 2:5 (References Jesus): For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;

Deuteronomy 30:6 (References God): And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

Matthew 23:9 (Parallel theme): And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.