

Discourse On Agape

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All quotes from KJV, except the word Agape was substituted when that word appeared in the original Greek.

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While love is not a trivial matter to define, the Bible does define it in various places, with a specific Greek word, as well as by describing what love does. We only have one word in English for love, which can mean the love of a mother for her child, the love of God, or the Hollywood barnyard type of love. The New Testament was written in Koine Greek – the common spoken Greek. The Greek language has four words for love:

Storgos- Love of family members for one another.

Phileo- Brotherly love, more accurately translated affectionate love

Eros- Sexual love between a man and a woman. This word is never used in the Bible.

Agape- A noun, to be distinguished from agapeo, 'to love,' a verb. To this day, Agape is almost never used in Greek literature, although agapeo is common. As we shall see, the apostles defined Agape as the unconditional love of God - as God Himself. This is not only seen by the use of the word Agape in various verses, but also by the context in which the word is used.

The apostle John made the sublime statement in 1John 4:16, "God is Agape." While the whole Bible is a revealing of the Agape of God, various verses and chapters specifically define what Agape is.

For instance, John 21:15-17. We would never see what actually transpired in the English translation, only in the original Greek:

Verse 15

Jesus asked Peter if he agape'd Him

Peter responded that he phileo'd Him

Verse 16

Jesus again asked Peter if he agape'd Him

Peter responded that he phileo'd Him

Verse 17

Jesus asked Peter if he phileo'd Him

Peter responded that he phileo'd Him

In other words, Peter recognized and acknowledged that phileo was the only type of love he had for Jesus. When Peter said he would not abandon Jesus, he meant it. Matthew 26:35, Mark 14:31, Luke 22:33, John 13:37. When they came to arrest Jesus,

Peter was ready to fight, even cutting off the ear of the high priest's servant. He was not aiming for his ear, but his head. But phileo did not have enough power to withstand being questioned by a girl, and Peter denied his Savior three times, just as Jesus foretold. Peter recognized that he did not have Agape, an unmovable love that is willing to say goodbye to life, not just for three days, but forever (Jesus could not see through the portals of the tomb; all His senses told Him there would be no resurrection). That is, phileo is changeable, depending on the circumstances; Agape never changes. Although Agape adapts to different circumstances, it remains Agape. Therefore, Peter could now be trusted to feed and care for the flock, as he was no longer trusting and relying on himself, but on Agape. John recognized that Agape is different than phileo, because the same two Greek words for love are used in the same order throughout the conversation, except for verse 17. That is very good evidence that the gospel writer was trying to convey that these two Greek words for love, phileo and Agape, are not interchangeable.

The conditional, changeable, and self seeking nature of every type of love other than Agape can plainly be seen in marriages. The couple may pledge their eternal love for each other, even till death, but after a few years, their love may wane. Infatuation is the type of love that is the norm when a man and a woman are said to be “in love.” This is reflected in the over 50% divorce rate in western nations. However, do not draw the conclusion that other cultures with a lower divorce rate, or even the western couples that do stay married, do so because they love with Agape. In the western nations, it's simply easier to get a divorce and move on. Many couples stay together because of cultural, monetary, or societal reasons, or, simply because they are compatible with each other. Humanity is born with a selfish nature, and selfish people love others because they find the outward features or characteristics of the other desirable. Thus, natural human love is essentially a feeling, akin to the biochemical reaction experienced when eating chocolate. In contrast, God loves because He *is* love. Agape *creates* desirable features and characteristics in all who do not resist it, the foremost of which is a character that reflects Agape.

Clearly, phileo, or any of the other types of love, are not enough to ensure lasting happiness. Only Agape is sustainable, and eternal.

The Son of God was begotten of the Father, and thus has the same nature as His Father. John 5:26. But when His divinity was combined with our humanity, Romans 1:3, He assumed the same selfish nature we all are born with, a nature that inwardly responds to selfishness, and needs redeeming. But by faith, Jesus never gave in to the selfish desires of the nature He assumed. Jesus continual and persistent choice was 'not I, but Agape,' thus, He is able to give us His agape as a gift. Jesus was begotten of the Father, and was born again as a man, so we could be born again. All who choose to retain His gift will enjoy it eternally with Him. He could not save Himself and us at the same time, so He chose us. Jesus loved us to the very end, even though all the physical evidence told Him He would not be resurrected. This is the ultimate expression of Agape.

Philippians 2:5-8 details the seven steps downward that the Son of God took in order to redeem mankind. Imagine, if you can, being in a perfect Heaven, receiving the worship and adoration of countless beings and worlds, who appreciate Agape, and where everything is in harmony, and willingly giving that up in order to redeem one world lost in selfishness. But Agape could do no less. Agape, by its very nature, is self-emptying.

We normally want to rise upward, we want to achieve ever greater power and glory, ever greater pay in our work. We want to have beautiful, intelligent children, and have everyone look up to us. That's what motivated the apostles before the cross. But the lesser forms of love are fleeting, and can never satisfy. In contrast to these other types of love, Jesus allowed Himself to be humiliated, in order to qualify to save us, and faithfully endured till the ultimate humiliation of the death of the cross. See Psalm 22 and Matthew 27 for some details. He denied His own desires, till the life He assumed - our natural life - reached it's inevitable conclusion, which is goodbye to life forever. Death, however, could not keep Him in the grave.

Before Pentecost, only the uninvited woman at Simon's feast, who poured the most expensive perfume on His head, and washed His feet with her tears, and dried them with her hair, understood what Jesus was facing. He repeatedly told everyone that He was going to Jerusalem to die, but only she was listening. She bought the most expensive perfume for His burial, but she wanted to do something for Him before He died. Mark 14, Luke 7. We should be thankful for this unnamed woman, as the memory of what she did helped Jesus bear the humiliation and shame of His Godforsaken death, when all seemed lost. Love - Agape love - is willing to be humiliated in order to propitiate the object of its affection. Agape is aware of His own existence, but has no thought of himself, and instead considers the needs of others. We will do well to remember that self-denial is what converted selfish people do; self-denial is simply what Agape is; it is God's nature. Agape has no sense of self to "deny."

God's self awareness is clearly demonstrated when God spoke to Abram; He stated:

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. Genesis 12:2,3

Contrast this to when satan refers to himself:

...I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most high. Isaiah 14:13,14

Quite a contrast. When God refers to Himself, it's other centered; how He will make others happy (that's what blessing means). When satan refers to himself, it's always to exalt himself, no matter who he has to sacrifice in order to accomplish his objectives, even the Son of God. As the Son inherited the same Agape as His

Father, Isaiah 14:15 tells us the natural result of trying to murder Agape: Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. The word translated hell is the Hebrew word *sheol*, which simply means the grave. The inevitable result of not receiving the Agape of God, and clinging to selfishness, is the second death - goodbye to life forever. If a tree limb could sever itself from the tree, the leaves would continue to be green for a short time. Then, they would naturally die. The tree limb has no life in itself, apart from the tree. John 15:6.

Created beings need the Son of God in order to show them loving submission. If the Father had created man, man would become self sufficient, since the Father is self sufficient, and end up destroying themselves. Since the Son of God received His life from the Father (John 5:26; 6:57; 8:42), He lovingly submits to the Father, thus demonstrating this loving submission to us. And, because He received His life from the Father, He could give it up, Luke 23:46, which the Father could not do. The Son of God had to be involved in creation, as well as the redemption of His creation. He is the only remedy to the pernicious principle of selfishness. The Bible, from start to finish, is really about the Son of God. He is the 'chief cornerstone,' the key to making everything work out.

When Jesus took seven steps downward in order to first qualify to save us, He first did what was natural for Him. Please note, however, that most of the steps downward that Jesus took were when His divinity was combined with our selfish humanity, a humanity that could be tempted inwardly, yet, He always rejected selfishness. Therefore, He had to continue to make conscious decisions to make unselfish choices, by faith. This naturally led to His continued downward trajectory, by this worlds standards, culminating with His final decision to die the equivalent of the second death - goodbye to life forever. Matthew 26:38, 39. Jesus life was not taken from Him; He freely gave it. Although He could not see through the portals of the tomb, and had no physical evidence He would be resurrected, He had chosen us over Himself, and left His fate in His Fathers hands. Jesus knew that satan desired to murder Him. He allowed it to happen, as His death was the only way He could give us eternal life. John 6:51; 10:28;

Matthew 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35. But the grave could not hold Him, as there was no selfishness in Him. Death can only hold those who persistently and consistently reject Agape, and retain their natural life. Since Jesus life was one of continual submission to the Father's will, He remained in the grave till His Father called Him forth, John 10:17,18; John 2:19-21; Acts 2:32. The Father's spirit, which raised Jesus, will also raise up those who had His spirit in them, Romans 8:11, or translate them so they never die. Hebrews 11:5; Revelation 7:3,4. The Father and Son's spirit is Agape, and can be where they physically are not. Acts 2:4,17; 8:39. The Father and Son desire to give us their spirit of agape. Receiving their spirit is the only way we can be with them forever. God's spirit is holy, and is the only spirit that has eternal life.

Agape is a principle.

Agape is the greatest power in the universe, or even apart from the universe, since it existed before anything it created. Agape always existed, which is why Jesus said, "I am," since He proceeded forth from the Father, inheriting the Father's original, unborrowed, underived life, his only begotten Son. Proverbs 8:22-30; Psalms 2:7; John 3:16; Hebrews 1:5; 1John 4:9. Although the Son inherited the nature and life of His Father - Agape - they differ in personality.

Agape is not defined by anything in the universe, or by any matter that can be known.¹ In fact, it creates matter, and everything it creates is good. Understanding the nature of Agape is not only difficult, but also impossible; the best we can do is to describe how it manifests.

I suspect that eternity will be necessary to even begin to understand Agape. Understand is probably not the correct word. Perhaps a better word is reflect, as the moon reflects the sun's brightness. Agape simply *is*; how can we understand it?

Colossians 2:2. Finite beings have difficulty understanding the infinite, though we can come ever closer, while never reaching it. Agape is higher than our imagination. Nevertheless, Agape is not a "mystery," but rather the ultimate in transparency. God wants us to know more about Him, and provides us with eternity to do so. God's original intention was that His Agape would flow from Him to Adam and Eve, and from them to each other, to their offspring,

and to His creation, as an answer to satan's accusations. God did not expect His Agape to flow back to Him. That would be selfish, and He certainly doesn't need it, since He *is* Agape. What does go back to God is gratitude, a heart appreciation of His never ceasing Agape, as the woman at Simon's feast demonstrated by anointing the Son of God with oil, and washing His feet with her tears, and drying them with her hair. She did what she could, and it was perfect. Mark 14:8,9; Luke 7:47. Her gratitude allowed her to receive even more of God's agape, and to share that Agape with others. Although all of Christ's apostles denied Him, the woman at the feast, Mary, did not.

Agape is creative, and everything it creates is, like Himself, good. However, when God creates sentient beings, they must of necessity have the power to choose - even something so inconceivable as to choose to reject Agape. Otherwise, they would not be sentient beings, but toasters. In the Old Testament, there is a word for sin that is translated as *iniquity*, the Hebrew word *awon*. Iniquity literally means "crooked" or "bent," as if Agape is doing a U-turn, back onto itself. (See also Isaiah 53:6 and Philippians 2:21). Thus, a created being takes God's Agape, and instead of sharing it with others, hoards it. A natural consequence of this attitude is a lack of gratefulness for God's munificence and beneficence. Simple logic would tell you that selfishness is not sustainable. The selfish being inherently knows this, and is expecting punishment. A selfish mindset is naturally shortsighted, and only thinks of it's own needs and desires. This leads to guilt, and consequently, fear. However,

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death.

-E. G. White, 1 Selected Messages, p. 235

The very first verse of the Bible states that "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Since God is Agape, the verse could very well read, "In the beginning Agape created the heaven and the earth." After the fall of man, not too long after his creation, Agape continued to be demonstrated. After Adam and his wife rejected Agape, and surrendered to the love of self, they saw that they were naked. Therefore, it's only reasonable to conclude that they had some kind of covering before they disobeyed the only command they had been given. In order to free themselves from their overwhelming sense of guilt and shame, they tried to fix the problem themselves, and attempted to cover their nakedness with fig leaves. Then, when the Son of God came looking for them, they both hid from Him, as they thought He was coming to kill them. Genesis 2:17. Instead, He was coming to give them good news, and, after the couple blamed their Creator for their predicament, He told them the natural consequences of their actions. Then, He "covered them," both figuratively and literally: "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them." Genesis 3:21. Please note that neither Adam nor Eve repented before God's grace - His agape - was shown to them. In fact they were passing on the blame for their rejection of Agape, Genesis 3:12,13. Rather, He "covered" them simply because the couple needed it. That's what Agape does.

Jesus once declared that God is good to the ungrateful and wicked, Luke 6:35, and I remember preaching a sermon on this text to a horrified and even astonished congregation, who simply refused to believe in this astounding liberality of God. That God should be in a state of constant fury with the wicked seemed to them only right and proper, ...but that God should be kind toward those who were defying or disobeying his laws seemed to them a monstrous injustice. Yet I was but quoting the Son of God Himself, and I only comment here that the terrifying risks that God takes are part of His nature. We do not need to explain or modify His unremitting love towards mankind.

-JB Phillips, Anglican Scholar

The repentance comes after the forgiveness, not before, as is commonly believed. In covering Adam and Eve with the dead animals skin, which moments before had been on a breathing and happy animal,² the couple began to see the enormity of what they had done. God was showing them forgiveness, and making it easier for them to repent. When Jesus was dying on the cross, He said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Luke 23:34. That forgiveness extended backwards and forwards in time, Malachi 3:6, as forgiveness is one of the characteristics of Agape. The goodness of God leads to repentance, and both repentance and forgiveness are the gift of God. Romans 2:4; 11:22.

Note also that God didn't just say, "Oh, that's ok, don't worry about it. No big deal." Rejection of Agape is a big deal, as selfishness is self destructive, and inevitably leads to our death, which is very painful for our Creator. Selfishness destroys individuals, as well as families, and Agape is familial. However, when Agape's wayward children realize, even unconsciously, that they are going to die, they will ultimately transfer the blame, and try to kill their Creator. (I realize this is crazy – there is a bit of insanity involved here.) So, what our original parents had really done, in disobeying God's command, was murder their Creator. That desire was not fully recognized, thus the act was not physically carried out, till four thousand years later. The people that murdered Jesus were Adam and Eve's offspring. As the acorn to the oak. All people through the centuries are a continuation of Adam's life (Acts 17:26), with a continual perfecting of the same selfish attitude - unless they repent, and receive God's Agape. But the Son of God had decided beforehand, in consultation with the Father, that He would save man at any cost to Himself, even if it meant goodbye to life forever. This was a business decision; there was no other way to save man. 1Peter 1:17-20.

Adam and Eve's eventual death was merely a sleep. Because they repented and looked forward to their Redeemer, they were spared the horror of falling asleep without any hope of the first resurrection. Where there is Agape, there is no longer any fear of the second death. Revelation 20:5-9.

A natural consequence of selfishness is a terrible sense of guilt. This guilt stems from the often unconscious desire to take the place

of our Creator, i.e., to do what pleases us. Man may seek to do the right thing in order to be relieved of this overwhelming sense of guilt, but this often results in a do-it-yourself works program, Exodus 19:8, rather than surrendering to the power of Agape, Genesis 15:6; 26:5.

While God has desired to teach men that from His own love comes the Gift which reconciles them to Himself, the archenemy of mankind has endeavored to represent God as one who delights in their destruction. Thus the sacrifices and ordinances designed of Heaven to reveal divine love have been perverted to serve as means whereby sinners have vainly hoped to propitiate, with gifts and good works, the wrath of an offended God.

-E. G. White, Prophets and Kings, p. 685

If man experienced the full weight of guilt, he would immediately die. That experience awaits those who are raised at the second resurrection, because they did not appreciate Agape, and consistently and persistently rejected the gift of life. Revelation 20:7,10,14; Jude 1:7; Malachi 4:1. Satan's spirit is selfishness, which can only result in death.

If the gospel could be condensed into one chapter, it would be Romans, Chapter 5, which reveals the depth of the agape of God toward our selfish humanity. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Romans 5:6. Then in Romans 5:7, Paul states: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." This is reminiscent of the well known story in Paul's day of Admetus and Alcestis. Admetus was a Greek young man, a good man, and Alcestis was his girlfriend. One day, the gods pronounced that Admetus would die, unless someone could be found to take his place. So Admetus went to his parents, and asked if they would die for him. They thought a while, and replied, 'son, we love you very much, but we cannot die for you.' He then went to his relatives and friends, all the people he had been so good to, and the reply was the same. Finally, his girlfriend Alcestis said, 'because Admetus is such a good man, and the world needs him so,

I will die for him.' The Greeks said, "This is it! This is the highest form of love; being willing to die for a good man." But Paul continues in verse 8, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Not because we are good, but because we are selfish and in great need, God's Agape love is poured out for us! Paul concludes in verses 9 and 10: "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10 For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

You find the same theme in Romans 5 stated in various ways. Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin, and as such, was trained as a lawyer. A lawyer always makes his case from as many angles as possible, to get his point across to a jury, as they are composed of people from different walks of life. The high point of Romans is chapter 5, verse 18: "Therefore as by the offence of one *judgment came* upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one *the free gift came* upon all men unto justification of life." John 4:42; 1Timothy 4:10.

Many people find Romans 5:18 difficult to believe. Surely we have to do something? Paul wrote the letter of Romans to the church in Rome, which was composed of both Jews and Gentiles. He knew that his fellow Jews were sticklers for the law, even though they never actually kept it. In Romans 3:28 he stated that "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." He felt compelled to tell his audience, a couple of verses later, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." Romans 3:31. That is, we are saved by faith, but that faith will be demonstrated by the way we live; by keeping the law. I also feel compelled to mention that if we persistently and consistently reject the gift - Agape - that God has given us, we will receive what we so earnestly desire and worked for - the second death - which is goodbye to life forever. Obadiah 16; Psalm 37:10; 9:5,6; 146:4; Ecclesiastes 9:5, and many more verses throughout the Bible. Christ's grace does not cover those who continually refuse it...because they continually and persistently refuse it. John 17:9. (Again, there is more than a bit

of insanity involved here, as this is the fate of the vast majority of all the people who have ever lived. This is the mystery of iniquity. 2Thessalonians 2:7,12, and demonstrates the deceitfulness of selfishness.) Agape does everything possible to save us, short of forcing us to live. However, the ungrateful experience God's temporal blessings while they are alive, although they never experience real and everlasting joy. Matthew 5:45

God has no problem saving us from death; it's very easy for Him. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Genesis 18:14 See also Jeremiah 32:17. Apparently, it's easy for us as well: "*For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*" Matthew 11:30. Let's not make it difficult for Agape to save us. We should cease our strivings to do it ourselves, which is an impossibility anyways, and simply let Agape do it, by surrendering to Agape daily, even moment by moment.³ Salvation is often referred to as 'being born again.' That is an apt description, as we have nothing to do with our natural birth; it simply happens, without any effort on our part. Although the new birth, like our natural birth, requires no effort on our part, it does require *faith*. All are given a measure of faith, Romans 12:3. We can choose to exercise that measure of faith, which does require some effort, and let God add to it, or, God forbid, reject it. Acts 26:14; Romans 6:6; 2Corinthians 5:17. We must 'let it be so,'⁴ even when faced with failure. 1John 1:9. Be thankful that Agape has saved you, and receive that Agape, which is the life of the Father and His Son (2Corinthians 4:10,11; 2Timothy 1:1; 1John 5:11,12), with thankfulness daily, even moment by moment.

A discourse on Agape would seem incomplete without at least touching on 1Corinthians 13, which is well known as the "love chapter." Some Bible translations use the word "charity," but the Greek word is actually agape. The chapter starts out by contrasting Agape and it's counterfeit - salvation by works. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Agape, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not Agape, I am nothing. And though I

bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not Agape, it profiteth me nothing.”

1Corinthians 13:1-3. Paul is saying that if we do all these things only in order to be saved, even being burned alive in the arena, we will have missed the mark. Paul then goes on to describe what Agape does: “Agape suffereth long, *and* is kind; Agape envieth not; Agape vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Agape never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, they shall fail; whether *there be* tongues, they shall cease; whether *there be* knowledge, it shall vanish away.” 1Corinthians 13:4-8.

The same idea is expressed in Matthew chapter 5. Can you imagine how shocked Jesus audience was when He told them to “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;”? Matthew 5:44. What Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount was contrary to everything the Pharisees had taught them. But it was all in harmony with the spirit of the law. Jesus Sermon on the Mount merely explained the true nature of the Ten Commandments law in Exodus 20:1-17, since over the centuries, Judaism had perverted it. Because the stone tablets on which the law was written was softer than the people's hearts, other laws had to be added as well. God had never even intended to give the law.³ The first four commandments deal with man's duty to God, and the last six with his duty to his fellow man. If we appreciate the Agape of God, we won't have any other gods before Him; we won't make any graven images, or take His name in vain; we will keep His Sabbath.

By the way, keeping the Sabbath does not only entail taking the seventh day off from work, and worshiping with like minded believers. The Sabbath is the day God set aside to especially enter His rest, and to be a mark of His authority.⁵ Paul points out in Hebrews chapter 4 that the Jews, the best Sabbath keepers in the world, never entered His rest. That rest is *in Christ*; Matthew 11:28, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and

I will give you rest.” If we are resting in Christ, nothing can keep us from observing the day that He set aside for us. God still invites us to rest in Him, especially on the Lord's Day. Revelation 1:10; Matthew 12:8.

The last six commandments deal with man's duty to his fellow man. If we receive God's agape, we will not kill, steal, commit adultery, bear false witness, or covet our neighbors property. Jesus summed up all the commandments like this: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind,” and “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Matthew 22:37, 39. Jesus also expounded on the spiritual nature of the law, which goes beyond the mere letter, when He stated that “...whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Matthew 5:28. Of course, the deeper spiritual nature of the law does not lessen the need to observe the letter of the law. If we observe the spirit of the law, we will also observe the letter. But if we observe the letter, we will not necessarily observe the spirit of the law. The law was only given to let us know if we are in Christ or not; that is, if we are truly in harmony with Agape. James 1:23-25. The Ten Commandments are the principle of Agape, applied to man.

Please note that the Ten Commandments should never be read without reading the prolog: “I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Exodus 20:2. Knowing the one true God, and His Son, is salvation to us, Deuteronomy 6:4; John 17:3; 1John 2:22-25, and enables us to keep the law, not by trying to keep it in our own strength, but by allowing His spirit of Agape - His very life - to rest in us. If we have the life of God in us, we will also have His law. The unconditional love of God and His law are inseparable. Agape is not complicated, nor is it difficult. The principle of agape merely involves giving up our own selfish will in order to make God and others happy. Galatians 2:20. Agape created us with His very life, to be like Himself, and only in this way can we truly be happy, for eternity.

The fall of man was so complete that it has taken eons to recover a more complete picture of Agape. In the Old Testament, the Savior's character was revealed to His people - that is, everyone - as they were able to understand it. Agape revealed itself to Moses, after the giving of the Ten Commandments: "And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, 7 Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear *the guilty*; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth *generation*." Exodus 34:6,7. And then in Jeremiah 31:3: "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, *saying*, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." But the most perfect revealing of Agape remains the life of the Son of God, especially the circumstances of His death. Again, see Psalm 22 and Matthew 27. The length, breadth, depth, and height of the Redeemer's agape love are but dimly understood, and will be the study of His children throughout eternity.

We cannot take anything on this earth to the New Jerusalem. When we are resurrected, or translated, with new bodies, we will leave everything behind. All we did here, everything we had - everything to do with our old life, will be gone. All we will be able to take with us is the character God developed, as we received His life, and allowed His Agape to rest in us, and then to flow through us to those around us. The only thing that goes back to God is our eternal gratefulness. May His name - Agape - be praised forever. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

1 This is not to say that Agape is not "material," or "substance." Otherwise, He would not sit on a throne. Revelation 4:2,9,10 What that "material" is, we will never fully understand.

2 Probably a lamb, in keeping with the principle of types.

3 See companion booklet, The Two Covenants

4 Genesis 15:6 The word translated 'believe' is the Hebrew word 'Aman.' Aman simply means, 'let it be so.' See The Two Covenants for more details.

5 See authors booklet, Is the SSN the Mark of the Beast in Revelation 13?

This is a condensed summary of the good news of the Bible. For an in depth look, please refer to the original. For further reading, see *The Desire of Ages*, and *The Great Controversy*, by E.G. White.

