

Log Jam!

Mt 5:17-20; 7:1-6; 7:12

Matthew 5:17-20

17 “Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. **18** I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. **19** So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

20 “But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

This is key to interpreting the SoM, Jesus and the Kingdom fulfill the law.

Over v21-48 he explains how the law is incorrectly interpreted, he tells us how to consider issues around anger, lust, divorce, promises, retaliation, enemies!

Fulfillment

v17 - is summed up in 7:12 and it is expanded in Mt 22:37-40 - “love God - love people”. (taken from Lev 19:18). If we live in a world where we love God and good is done to everyone then we have returned to the paradise of Eden which is of course the aim of history.

Matthew 7:12

“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

This rule was already known in Jewish literature.

v17 ***Fulfill or accomplish the purpose.*** The law is fulfilled in that the prophetic words about the Messiah come about and also the temple sacrificial system and code is fulfilled by Jesus. We see the intention of the law summarised and worked out in the behavioural pattern of Jesus’ life. The required sacrifice is met in his death.

eg in Mt 12:7-8 Jesus teaches the people that he is greater than the law of the Sabbath because he operates out of the “law of mercy not sacrifice” - the higher law of mercy trumps OT law. He lives in mercy and pays the sacrifice.

Bit like European law trumping UK law

Mess - “im going to pull it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama”

Wesley - “to establish, illustrate and explain its highest meaning”

Broadly there are two approaches to the law

- 1) it was all wrong and must be abolished
- 2) it was good as far as it went, it was useful for the purpose that it was designed for but was imperfect and temporary

Jesus held view 2.

“But under the regime of Jesus these ends can be still better secured , and the law, though superseded as the final authority, will be fulfilled, completed and **absorbed into a higher rule of life**” Theodore Robinson

What is the purpose of the law?

v18 The letter of the law is valid and still valid until the final coming of the Kingdom. If it were not valid then man would not have any standard by which he can realise his sin and therefore have no need to appeal to the higher law of mercy. Jesus remains the fulfillment of the law, the law however still exists.

We live in a modern world where the notion of sin is being minimised. One of the problems of a liberal democracy is that my idea of wrong can not be imposed on you. Universal truth is replaced with moral duality.

Law remains powerful because it speaks to the conduct of the people of God. The SoM is a reinterpretation of the law in the light living in as a “Kingdom People”. The sacrificial and ceremonial system may now be obsolete, but the guiding principles behind the law remain in force. Eg issues like anger, adultery, lying still need to be interpreted in the believers life.

Eventually with the final coming of the KoG, its fullness, all the remaining laws will pass away because the eternal behaviour of the redeemed saints will embrace the law fully in their hearts, so there is no need for a written code!

Ignorance of Sin

v19 Rabbis differentiated between light commandments (tithing produce on sabbath) and weighty commandments (murder, idolatry) - Jesus sets a greater standard they are all important and they all cause sin.

We need to be very careful in our attitude to sin. It is easy for us to deplore sexual sin but not to take seriously the sin of gluttony! Our natures grade sin, and of course our church cultures see some sin as worse than others. The reality is that all sin is wrong, of course some sins have a social consequence (ie murder), but we are all sinners, and if we are not really sinning anymore because we are allowing the sanctifying power of God in our lives then we were sinners - our job is to help others out!

Key is “obey” and “teach the law” - the mature believer should live the kingdom life, not a list of do’s and don’ts but a heart response to the loving attention of a Father/King. We want to obey because love makes it easy to obey. Our teaching must come out of the same spirit, we don’t want people to get back into a “works” driven response to God, no we want people to respond in love to God. However, we will need to work at our life. Living a kingdom life will not just happen, we have to choose to live that way. We work at it not because we HAVE to but rather because we WANT to. When we do exams the best results come from students that want to do well not those that have been told to do well.

The best way to understand and interpret the law of the Torah is not through the religious scholars of the time but rather through Jesus. “Jesus alone is in a position to penetrate to the intended meaning of the Torah” Donald Hagner

Higher Standard

v20 there is a calling to a higher standard of righteousness. Jesus found the “professional” religious people to be hypocrites, he seems to make the bar even higher. The eternal law has a higher threshold of righteousness.

The pharisees played lots on external show but forgot about the internal reality . In Mt 23:5; 27-28 he calls them “whitewashed tombs”, external piety is not at all godly, God looks at the heart. There is much about the law that looks to the externals, it can be interpreted as fulfilling external obligations but ignoring internal realities - God is interested in the heart. The KoH is internal!

We can judge people by “external” things, they come to church dressed well, they look like they are a worshiper, they seem friendly - but God is always interested in the heart that is searching for him and looking to him. Someone can be externally a mess but seek the very heart of God!

Kingdom reality works from inside out because it produces changed hearts and new motivations.

Gal 5:22-23 - fruit of the spirit , no law against these things
Heb 8:13 - law in mind and on heart

It is through the teaching of Jesus that every aspect of the law is fulfilled, Jesus is the infallible expounder of the truth of the law

“The pattern for righteousness taught by Jesus reflects the true meaning of the Torah, and thus that the Torah in its entirety is preserved in and through the ethical teaching of the church” Hagner

Matthew 7:1-6

“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. 2 For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

3 "And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? 4 How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.

6 "Don't waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don't throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.

Judging Others

v1-2 - if we revert to the law and judge others then we can of course expect to be judged by the same standard. If we want to be judged by the mercy standard then we should use the mercy standard for others

Mess - "that critical spirit has a way of boomeranging"

The issue here is not judgement but where does judgement start? We should judge ourselves harshly so that we can be generous and tolerant with others.

We have been given a new "royal standard" by which to judge so use it - the judgement of mercy.

Self Examination

v3-5 Speck in eye example. We can become obsessed by what others are doing that we concentrate on their problem or sin and forget our own. Remember that the NT standard is a higher order standard. To operate in mercy requires a higher revelation than operating under law. The command is not that we ignore other peoples "specks" but get them in context. Of course we need to help people remove their specs but we must be sorting out own first. eg in planes they say put your own mask on before helping others!

Mess - "Its easy to see a smudge on your neighbour's face and be oblivious to the the ugly smear on your own"

This is primarily contextualised in the community of believers (your brother).

Knowing when to Walk away

v6 "do not cast what is holy to the dogs" scavenger dogs sniffing the rubbish - dirty animals. Dogs became a term used by the jews to describe the enemies of the people of God. Pigs were also seen as unclean animals. Pearls are that which is of infinite value - the truth about the KoG (Mt 13:45-46). The key here is that believers need to operate out of mercy, but be wise not to waste themselves on people that will continually reject the message of the KoG. (Mt 10:14 "wipe of dust of feet", Ac 18:6). The truths of the Kingdom are precious and not everyone will understand. Many will mock the truth, they are trampling it underfoot. This Kingdom we are a part of is precious, one of the reasons Jesus spoke about the Kingdom in mystery terms is that it can only be unlocked by the

seeker - we only get the kingdom if our hearts are seeking out the truth - pursuers of the treasure within.