

A change of law

A change from externally keeping Old Testament laws to the keeping of the law of love

“When a change in the priesthood takes place, there must also be a change in the Law” (Heb. 7:12, ISV).

“I am giving you a new commandment to love one another” (Joh. 13:34).

Nowhere in the Old Testament do we read about a law of love and if there was one it could then not be called new. In the New Testament this law is called the *“Royal Law” (James 2:8)*. About it Jesus said:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matt. 22:37-39).

To think that the weighty system of Old Testament law with more than six hundred commands, is fulfilled by Jesus’ single instruction to love God and your neighbour! By obeying this law you fulfil all that God expects of you and this is what Paul was trying to tell the Galatians; by obeying the law of love it was not necessary to keep the law of Moses anymore *“for all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, You shall love your neighbour as yourself” (Gal.5:14)*. Peter touches the same subject and writes that *“... love covers a multitude of sins [forgives and disregards the offences of others]” (1Pet.4:8, Ampl.)*.

A parable that Jesus told illustrates the difference between the keeping of Old Testament laws and in contrast, fulfilling the law of love:

*“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers, who stripped him of his clothing and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by coincidence a certain priest came down that way **and seeing him, he passed by on the opposite side**. And in the same way a Levite, also being at the place, coming **and seeing him, he passed on the opposite side**. But a certain traveling Samaritan came upon him, and seeing him, he was filled with pity. And coming near, he bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine, and set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn, and took care of him” (Luk. 10:30-40, MKJV, my emphasis).*

In this story the priest and the Levite are usually seen as the loveless, unsympathetic culprits for the way in which they seem to callously ignore the wounded man by passing on the other side of the road. What is often not considered is the fact that they were most likely influenced by their obedience to the Scriptures which they were taught to strictly obey. Being well instructed in the Torah they obviously must have been familiar with the law concerning a wounded person which was found along the way which stated that

“whoever in the open field touches one that has been pierced with a sword, or one that has died of himself, or the bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days” (Num 19:16,LITV).

Through the conduct of the Priest and the Levite Jesus illustrates the merciless attitude that can be caused by rigidly keeping the law. He contrasts it with the sympathetic behaviour of the Samaritan who the Jews considered to be unholy.

Does the fact that the Samaritan used oil and wine to treat the wounds of the traveller signify that he represents the New Testament? (Wine is symbolically associated with the instituting of the New Testament and oil with the anointing of the Holy Spirit and with healing – **Matt.26:27, James 5:14**).

Conclusion

One of the reasons why the Jewish religious leaders wanted Jesus out of the way was because they saw Him as a law-breaker. He for example contradicted the Old Testament dietary laws by proclaiming all food to be clean by explaining that nothing that enters the body from the outside can make a person unclean, but that it was what comes from the inside, from the heart, that does it:

*“ ‘ Don't you know that nothing that goes into a person from the outside can make him unclean? Because it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and is expelled as waste.’ **(By this he declared all foods clean.)** He continued, ‘It's what comes out of a person that makes a person unclean, because it's from within, from the human heart, that evil thoughts come, as well as sexual immorality, stealing, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, cheating, shameless lust, envy, slander, arrogance, and foolishness.’ ” **(Mark 7:14-23, ISV, my emphasis).***

To vex the scribes and Pharisees even further was the fact that Jesus also ignored other Old Testament laws like those concerning lepers and corpses by deliberately touching them **(Num 19:16, Lev.13:45-46, Luk.7:11-17, Matt.8:1-4)**. By looking at His conduct and teachings one can only conclude that Jesus *“... **brought the Law to an end, so that everyone who believes is put right with God**” (Rom. 10:4,GNB).*

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