

## 224 Continuing discussions

(The following covers an ‘obvious’ point, but one that I stupidly hadn’t realised – so it’s probably nothing new for you.)

While discussing about the law with my kind friend,<sup>[222,223]</sup> he pointed me to Luke 16<sup>16-18</sup> where John the Baptist seemed to be doing away with the law. It’s a certainly very odd passage, three verses sandwiched between two parables – marooned, even – but Jesus says,

*The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.*

*Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*

A strange mix! But it set me thinking: OK, it doesn’t mean that the law was no longer needed, but we know that *something* pretty cataclysmic was happening around the time that John and Jesus did their preaching – but what? And because I tend to think in terms of overviews, looking for patterns, and wanting to see what God is doing overall, I wrote a few things down in columns – ‘before’ and ‘after’ – and it was really enlightening. I’ll probably share it with you, once I’ve thought it through a bit more.

But with my proofreader’s eye, I spotted that (in this translation, anyway) Jesus is saying that nothing will drop out of the ‘Law’, not out of the ‘law’. Earlier, always looking for consistency, I had noticed that in my email discussions with my friend I had oscillated between ‘law’ and ‘Law’ – which should it be?!

What is it that Jesus is saying ‘the least stroke of a pen’ will not drop out of? In my head, it was the lowercase ‘l’ version – I thought he was saying that none of the laws (plural) of the Old Testament would be done away with. That had worried me as it’s obvious that some laws are no longer needed – food laws, for example, and stoning disobedient children, hopefully!

No! Jesus wasn’t talking about the law**s**; he was saying that The-Law-and-The-Prophets – in other words the Old Testament – is essential *because it points forward to him*. He came to fulfil The-Law-and-The-Prophets, and that makes much more sense to me now!

Can you see how ‘the bigger picture’ is building up here? The Old Testament is essential as it shows how God was working out his plan, starting with Abraham, to bring blessing to the whole world. Throughout the Old Testament God had placed signs of what was about to be fulfilled in Jesus – no wonder Paul and others were so excited when they discovered God’s amazing plan!

The ‘before’ and ‘after’ either side of John and Jesus was **not** that the law was abolished – and anyway remember that, for 500 years after Abraham, there was no law – so exactly what **did** change?

Back soon...