

## 419 The fulfilment of the Law?

I said last time<sup>[418]</sup> that maybe we should ask, ‘What was Jesus (positively) dogmatic about?’ Well, here’s one definite (dogmatic?) statement:

*I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.* Mt 5:18

That’s what he said, but what did he *mean*? How do we *interpret* that teaching of Jesus, and how do we *apply* it today? Well, Jesus’ words could be interpreted to mean that we can’t say, of any of the laws: ‘That doesn’t apply today.’ But, as I’ve asked before, what if my son is disobedient?! Deut 21:18-21 In Jesus’ day, the Jews were still into stoning (e.g. the woman caught in adultery), so how did the disciples know, and how do we know, which laws do still apply today?

Matthew, writing mainly for the Jews, reported Jesus twice as answering the question: ‘Which is the most important (overriding?) commandment in the law?’ Mt 12:28f, 22:36f And we know well what Jesus’ answer was: the Law is summed up as loving God and loving your neighbour, even when (especially when?) the neighbour is your enemy.

Now, Jesus was certainly hot on sin: because it causes so much damage, to both the sinned-against and the sinner. On that, he and the Pharisees agreed. But the solution, for the latter, was sticking firmly to the rules. And Jesus got into trouble because he did things that were against certain specific laws. Yet Paul and Peter agree that Jesus never actually sinned.<sup>2 Cor 5:21, 1 Peter 2:22</sup>

So what’s the difference? How could Jesus break some of the laws and yet say he came to fulfil the Law? Maybe it’s the *spirit* of the Law, not the *letter* of the Law, that is the more important? Paul agrees: *Commandments like ‘don’t commit adultery, don’t kill, don’t steal, don’t covet’ – and any other commandment – are summed up in this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’* [Rom 13:8]

I’m sure you’ll have worked out where I’m heading with this line of argument: Paul put gay sex into his list of what I called ‘obvious sins’,<sup>[417]</sup> and where there’s any element of exploitation, clearly there’s no need for any discussion, but what about Christians who are gay?<sup>1</sup> How should they (and we!) interpret the relevant OT laws and the NT scriptures?

So let’s turn my comments about sin around: how do we know if something actually *is* a sin? Fundamentally, does it damage someone else? Also, does it damage you, yourself?

Within a lifelong personal commitment, sexual intimacy can enhance that relationship – that’s my experience, anyway. So, for Christians who are gay, how do they decide whether they should even consider the possibility of a lifelong relationship, given that (we say) ‘the Bible says’ that gay sex is a sin? My mind is firmly (dogmatically!) made up: it’s not for me to judge them.

Paul Bev. 9.3.26

---

<sup>1</sup> Some Christians claim that there’s no such thing as ‘being gay’. Try googling, ‘Is there any scientific evidence that some people are gay?’