

Bookends of the Gospels: Matthew 5 and John 13

The heart of the Law

Matthews bookend

I know that we have old laws. Have you ever heard of old laws that are finally removed like tying up your horse downtown? They are laws we don't use anymore but they still are on the books. For thousands of years the Israelites had the same laws. Actually, they had even more added by the religious rulers. The old laws of Moses had become heavier and more burdensome. We have that today with tons and tons of Laws.

Matthew has an extensive section on law. In Matthew 5:17-18 it has Jesus stating that he has not come to abolish the law, but fulfil it. Huh? There were people who said they lived by the Ten Commandments. There were others who said they lived by the extra laws devised by the current religious rulers. Those new rules were extensions of the old laws. Jesus stated that he was not here to crush the old laws, but make them deeper with more bite. The fact was that the old laws were being interpreted in the wrong manner. Jesus came to put a stop to that.

It's about the heart of the law. Laws are meant to protect people rather than just to punish. The old laws had been turned into overbearing rules. The Sermon on the mountain in Matthew 5 is all about giving deeper understanding to the old laws. To give the heart and intent back to law. Still today, there are people who say we must follow these new teachings. They miss the point.

This bookend of Matthew is all about deepening the old laws. In a way, this is blasphemy and radical. The laws were sacred. They believed Jesus was changing the laws. I believe that if you read Matthew 5 you will see that Jesus is only giving more meaning and teeth to why God made laws at all. This bookend is reminding the people that God has not forgotten his laws or how they were truly meant to be used.

What's it all means?

We are people just like those who lived before us. We have taken some of the past and incorporated it into the future. We have kept old laws. Lawyers have dug through old law cases to change new laws. They have struck down old laws and created new ones. Unfortunately, we have an ever-changing law atmosphere. Legal and not legal is confusing. It seems we have made a mess of law.

In Jesus day it was the same way. They had tinkered with the old laws. What I find ironic is that Jesus did not lie. He said he had not come to abolish the law but fulfill it. The spirit of the law is to protect and give rights. The sermon on the mountain did that. He gave heavenly rights to the poor, meek, and peaceful. The victims have rights in heaven. It comes back to Jesus also saying that what was loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven. That means that the law of God applies all over the universe.

In this bookend we have a strengthening of Gods original laws. It's not about new laws replacing the old ones. No, it's about deeper interpretation of the heart of the law. They were never meant to oppress. Matthew shows us that Jesus came to be consistent. He also came to demonstrate that God does not change. If God makes a command or a commitment then it's binding. We see that in the

covenants God made as well. The nice part is the consistency of the message. God is love first and laws second.