

“The Law or the Prophets”—Timeless or Temporary?

A recent letter in the Editor’s Mailbag of Eugene’s *The Register Guard* (Tim Omachi, March 5, 2015) slams the “Bronze Age” barbarity of the Old Testament (his view). Included in this is the OT’s condemnation of homosexuality. It was pointed out that many people just pick and choose from the Bible what they find appealing and ignore the rest. Best to do this, Omachi opines, on the homosexuality question.

He is correct on the matter of some people picking and choosing only what they want from Bible. Of course, that is a reflection on the “pickers,” not on the integrity of the Bible’s message itself.

But the lynch pin of the piece under review is the citing of Jesus’ statement at Matthew 5:17-19 with the pronouncement that, “Anyone who wants to ignore the Old Testament has to answer for that verse.”

The verses cited are a part of the much larger context of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. As verses 19 and 20 show, Jesus rebuffed the Pharisees and Scribes’ corruption of the Law of Moses followed by six examples of their having done so (:21-48). This corruption of the law as foisted on the people by the Pharisees and Scribes did not, however, lessen the integrity of the law itself nor detract in the least from what it actually taught and required of the people of Israel to whom it had been given. Jesus therefore told the people, “Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17, 18).

Thus, the question that must be addressed is, Did Jesus’ work on earth fulfill the Law and the Prophets, or not? If not, that system yet stands as binding, at least on Jews. But if Jesus fulfilled it, then it could pass and give way to God’s New Covenant in Christ.

To fulfill the Law and the Prophets Jesus came; fulfill this mission he did. He said everything the prophets had written concerning him would be accomplished by his death and resurrection (Luke 18:31-33). So it was done (Luke 24:44-48). The O.T. preparation is fulfilled; the New Covenant of salvation for all mankind is now in place (Acts 2:36ff).

Next question: what did Jesus teach in person on homosex, and what does his New Covenant teach on it now? Next article.... —Jerry F. Bassett