

• James describes what he calls the 'royal law'

James has criticized the prejudice and pride of his friends. Now he puts to them the alternative. They have been ruled by their desire to lord it over others and maintain an upper-class Christian fellowship that is only for rich Christians. Instead James asks them to follow the royal law of love. *'However if you fully keep the royal law, agreeing with the scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself", you do well'* <sup>□1</sup>.

□1 2:8

**1. The Christian is to be ruled by 'the royal law agreeing with Scripture'**

1. **The Christian is to be ruled by 'the royal law, agreeing with Scripture'**. What exactly is this 'royal law' that the Christian is to keep? It is the law of the Lord Jesus Christ, the law of love, the law mentioned in Matthew 7:12 which summarizes the entire Old Testament. Why is it called the 'royal law'? One reason might be that the law of love is 'king' over every other possible commandment. Another reason is certainly that it is the law of the kingdom of God. When God is acting as a king in our lives through the Lord Jesus Christ, He will lead us into ways of love. It is the rule of how He leads us as the king in our lives.

**2. The 'royal law' is not purely and simply the Mosaic law of the Old Testament**

2. **The 'royal law' is not purely and simply the Mosaic law of the Old Testament.** It is quite clear in the letter of James that he has no interest at all in the vast majority of the Mosaic rulings. He says nothing about the Sabbath or about circumcision or food regulations. The details of Mosaic regulations get no mention in James whatsoever. His talk about 'the law' does not seem to refer to anything specially Mosaic at all, in its details. He knows that at least two of the ten commandments (and no doubt he would have included others if he had had occasion to mention them) are still kept by the Christian. But they are kept at an altogether higher level. We shall see that he regards the Christian's law as something higher than merely refraining from murder. What he calls murder is higher than the literal taking of life – as we shall soon see. So the law of the Christian is something higher than the letter of the Ten Commandments. When James says 'agreeing with Scripture' he quotes not the ten commandments, but Leviticus 19:15! He takes a line of the Old Testament tucked away in a very obscure part of the Old Testament legislation. It is as if he says 'Do you want to be under Old Testament law? Then be under **this** bit!'

• It is something altogether higher than the Old Testament law of Moses

**3. The royal law of the kingdom of God 'fulfils' the Mosaic law**

3. **The royal law of the kingdom of God 'fulfils' the Mosaic law.** Just as animal-sacrifices point to and predict the cross of Jesus, so the Mosaic law (including the Ten Commandments) points to and predicts a high level of godliness which is the Christian's law. Are we 'under the law'? Well, are we under the animal sacrifices? No – but we are under what they point to! Are we under the morality of the law? Well, we do not break it but we go beyond it. We are under what it points to! The Christian is not 'under' the Mosaic legislation but he or she fulfils it by walking in the Holy Spirit. The royal law is the law of Christ, the law of faith, the law of the Spirit of life, the law of liberty<sup>□1</sup>. It is not the Mosaic legislation. It is not **exactly** the Ten Commandments (it goes beyond them; it leaves aside the death penalty for disobedience against the first seven of them; it re-interprets the Sabbath radically).

• Not under sacrifices that pointed to Jesus

• A higher morality

• Reinterpreted Sabbath

□1 Galatians 6:2; Romans 3:27; 8:2; James 2:12

#### 4. The 'royal law' of love can be defined and explained

• For the Christian 'the law of Christ' is a powerfully upgraded law

• It is a law of faith – trusting Jesus again and again for the righteousness He wants to produce in us

4. I hasten to add: the 'royal law' of love can be defined and explained. Following James, I am about to define it! I am not writing of vague, impulsive, undefined, 'loving' feelings! Love can be described in words! You can talk about it in a very definite way – as James is doing. But we must mention the spirit before we mention the letter! If you want to drive a car, there are some guidelines about how to do it. But there is no point in having car-driving guidelines if you have no intention of ever driving a car! There is no point in having guidelines about Christian love if you do not have a powerful God-given eagerness to love everyone everywhere! If you want to be a man or woman of love there are some definite guidelines in the matter – and they go further than most of what we have in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy! The old Mosaic law does not tell us to pray for our enemies (although it does tell us to slaughter Canaanites!) For the Christian 'the law of Christ' is a powerfully upgraded law. It is the rule of the Holy Spirit. It is a law of faith – trusting Jesus again and again for the righteousness He wants to produce in us.

#### 5. The royal law of love forbids discrimination

• The law of Moses protected the poor but allowed other forms of discrimination

• The Royal law allows NO discrimination

5. The royal law of love forbids discrimination. James says: 'But if you treat one kind of person as more important than another, you commit sin, being convicted by the law as transgressors<sup>Ⓜ1</sup>'. The Mosaic law protected the poor but it allowed other forms of discrimination. It favoured one nation, Israel. It favoured two tribes, Judah and Levi. It favoured men above women. But we are under (or 'united to') the law of Christ **Himself** – an upgraded, transformed, version of the law of God, coming to us supremely in a living personal relationship which is powerfully at work in our hearts. The law of Christ will not allow us to discriminate against anyone. We are convicted of sin by Christ Himself when we discriminate against the poor – or against anyone!

Ⓜ1 2:9



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