

Dear Tammy,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked why we are only to live by certain laws mentioned in the Old Testament and not others. You asked what was right today, “an eye for an eye” from the Old Testament or “let the LORD have vengeance” from the New Testament.

The Law of Moses never applied to the Gentiles. It was given to the Jews to keep them pure and separate from the nations around them. The Jews were God’s special people from which Messiah was to come. The Law acted as a schoolmaster in order to bring the Jews to Christ. “So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.” (Galatians 3:24-25) Once Jesus came and fulfilled the Law by his sacrifice unto death, the Law was no longer binding to the Jew providing he accepted Jesus. The Apostle Paul further explains this thought by commenting, “that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 2:15) Christians, be they Jew or Gentile, are not required to follow the 300 plus laws stated in Leviticus, but are required to follow the Ten Commandments. In fact, these commandments should be taken to a highest level possible and be written on the heart.

In Matthew, chapter 5, Jesus illustrates the above principle by using dramatic examples to bring home the point. “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. You have heard it said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:38-45) Jesus, we believe, is telling us not to exact vengeance on another fellow imperfect sinful human being for transgressions done to us. Instead, Jesus is showing us the importance of the law of love, rather than the absolute law of justice in the Old Testament that resulted in a hardness of heart and a pitiless attitude. Jesus is not telling the Christian to be a doormat, but is illustrating figuratively what his heart attitude should be, even to his enemies. The Christian should emulate God who is sympathetic to and understanding of his enemies, so sympathetic, in fact, that he provided a sacrifice for them through his Son and, thereby, a reconciliation with himself.

You asked if we should follow the Old Testament “eye for an eye” principle or let the LORD have vengeance. The Apostle Paul answers this question in Romans 12:19-21. “Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay,’ says the Lord. On the contrary: ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.’ . . . Do not be overcome with evil, but overcome evil with good.”

We hope we have answered your question. Please write us again.

Sincerely,
Christian Questions Radio