

IS THE OT LAW FOR CHRISTIANS?

What about all those strange Old Testament Laws?



A CULTURAL BATTLE -

“If Homosexuality is wrong, then so is eating shellfish, pork, and wearing mixed fabric?” -

If you have ever told someone that God considers certain behaviors as sin, you have inevitably run into this objection. “God also said it is sinful to eat shellfish, cut your beard, and wear mixed fabric too!”

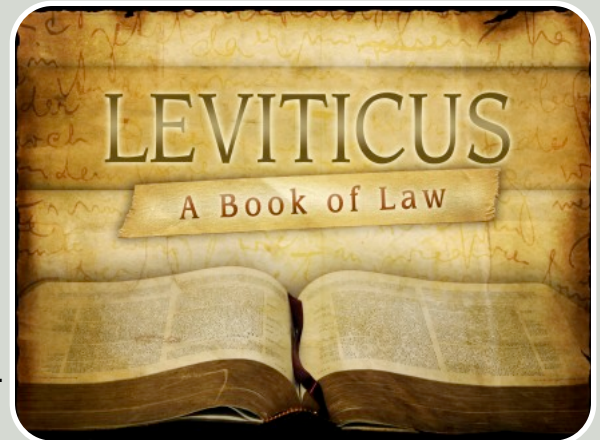
Many Christians have no idea how to answer this objection, and worse, many start to see the logic in it because they don't understand the context of Scriptural laws.

For a moment, think about what you would say to someone who raised this argument. Do you have a coherent and biblical reply? What would you say?

If you don't really know how to answer, you are in the majority. Hopefully, after studying this lesson, you will be equipped to not only know what you believe, but why you believe it.

The question we will seek to answer is simple: “Why do we keep certain Old Testament Laws and not others?”

And how do we know the difference?



Leviticus 17-26 is known as “The Holiness Code” by scholars. It is from here that most of the questionable laws come.

But we will see that Leviticus and Deuteronomy were the two Old Testament books that Jesus quoted most.

Understanding Biblical Law



The answer is quite simple when we understand the Old Testament law.

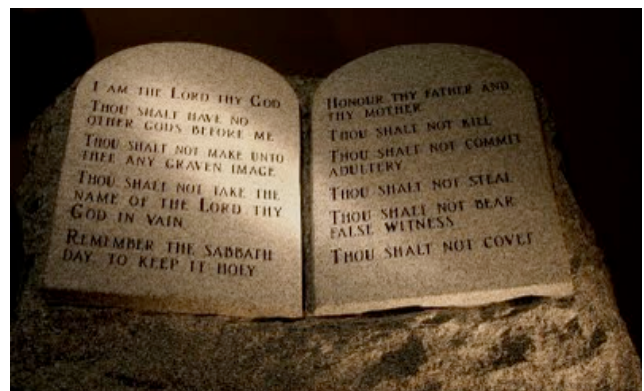
There are three types of law in the Old Testament. There is the civil law, the ceremonial law, and the moral law.

Civil Law - was only for National Israel during the theocracy (when God ruled their nation exclusively)

Ceremonial Law - was done away with at the death of Christ

Moral Law - still in effect and forever binding on all mankind

Now lets look at them in depth....



AN EXAMPLE OF CIVIL LAW

When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge. 11 Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee. 12 And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge: 13 In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the Lord thy God. - Deuteronomy 24:10-13



Obey Your Leaders

Modern Christians are not able to keep the Old Testament civil laws without disobeying the civil laws the American government has put in place. Because of this, we must obey Paul and Peter's command to obey the government which we are under.

The Civil Law

The civil laws were the criminal code for the nation of Israel with procedures, punishments, regulations, and restrictions. Civil laws were specifically for the Jewish civil government when they were exclusively the people of God. They include:

1. Justice practices (Lev. 24:17-23)
2. Laws of Property redemption (Lev. 25)
3. Retaining just scales in commerce (Lev. 19:35)
4. Specific regulations for those caught in robbery, extortion, false witness, and restitution of property (Lev. 6:1-7).

Civil Laws also include the laws regarding the cities of refuge (Sanctuaries for those who committed unintentional crimes Num. 35), the canceling of debts during jubilee years, and the regulation of commerce (can you imagine trying to pay for groceries at Wal-Mart with chickens and goats?)

These laws governed the society of Israel as they engaged in commerce, social interaction, and societal regulations. They cannot apply to a modern context.

In Romans 13:1-2, Paul specifically tells New Testament believers to be subject to the powers and governing authorities which they are under. Believers are not to revert to the old Jewish civil laws for their commerce and regulations. We are to be subject to our own governing authorities.

Likewise, 1 Peter 2:13-14 says, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; 14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well."

Here again, we see a New Testament Apostle telling us to be subject to our own governmental systems rather than fall back onto the ancient Israelite model.

This is Important!

The civil laws also deal with what should be done with those who break God's moral law.

For example: Deuteronomy 22:22 deals with the command against adultery, which is still binding today. However, the punishment for the crime in ancient Israel was part of their civil law.

If a man be found lying with a woman married to an husband, then they shall both of them die, both the man that lay

with the woman, and the woman: so shalt thou put away evil from Israel.

While the command to abstain from adultery is a moral command which stands forever, the punishment ancient Israel was commanded to execute was part of their civil code.

Today, we are told by the Apostles that we must abide by the civil law we are under, not the law of Israel.

The Ceremonial Law

The ceremonial laws were the sacrificial laws, regulations for worship, and the cleanliness codes for Israel. These laws regulated the way Israel was allowed to approach and worship a Holy God.

Some examples include:

1. Various sacrificial offerings for sin (Lev. 1-6)
2. Priestly duties (Lev. 7:1-37)
3. Laws on animals for food (Lev. 11:1-47)
4. Cleaning the house of lepers (Lev. 14:33-57)
5. Laws of Atonement (Lev. 16:1-28; 17:1-16)
6. Regulations for Priests (Lev. 21, 22)
7. Festivals (Lev. 23:1-25)

These laws which regulated how men were allowed to worship and approach God expired with the fulfillment of Christ's work as our

High Priest. These laws were fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Of course we understand that Jesus' sacrifice cancelled the need for animal sacrifice in worship (Heb. 7:27).

Likewise, God Himself tells Peter in Acts 10:15 that all the food cleanliness laws were done away with in Christ. (also Mrk. 7:18-19).

In addition to this, Jesus told His disciples that the purification rituals were fulfilled in Himself. In John 13:10, Jesus told Peter, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and **ye are clean**, but not all." (speaking of Judas).

Because of the perfect sacrifice of Christ, the laws regarding sacrifice, worship, and purification are no longer in effect. Christ has purified His people once and for all.

"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." Hebrews 10:14



LAWS



Context, Context, Context

When complaining about the various Old Testament laws, many people refuse to read the "whole story" of God's revelation. We must look at the different laws in Scripture in light of who Jesus is and what He did. This Does not mean that all God's law is abolished, but much of it has been fulfilled in Christ.

THE MORAL LAW

Based on God's character: Forever Binding for Every person, Everywhere, in all Times.

The moral law of God is universal and unchangeable. These are the laws that reflect God's nature as a perfect being. They are most specifically embodied in the Ten Commandments, however, believers find them spread throughout Scripture.

These are moral statutes that never change. For example, it was sinful and wrong to murder even before the command "thou shalt not murder" was given. Remember Cain and Abel? Cain killed his brother and God punished his sin even before Moses recorded the law. For all intents and purposes, there was no written law, yet it was still wrong to murder.

Likewise, there are very few people who would dispute the fact that murder is still a breach of God's

law today, even though Christ has paid for believer's sins. No one in their right mind argues, "It's ok for me to murder someone because we live under grace!"

There are laws of morality that are unchangeable from the beginning of time and forever.

Because of the various kinds of laws in Leviticus, many people simply refuse to accept any of them. They say things like, "Those laws are for those ancient people and most of them are immoral! We should forget all that stuff and just concentrate on what Jesus would do! Let's all be like Jesus!"

That kind of argument is hilarious to me. They say we should



be like Jesus when He said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matt. 22:39). Yet, when Jesus said this He was quoting Leviticus 19:18!

Likewise, if we throw away all the Levitical laws, we would have to abolish God's laws against incest (Leviticus 20:17-21) and bestiality (having sex with animals) (Lev. 18:23; 20:16).

Notice that the Levitical Holiness Code is the **ONLY** place in

all of Scripture which condemns these practices. If all the laws of Moses are done away with then incest and bestiality are also done away with.

Anyone can see there is differentiation in the Old Testament laws. Everyone differentiates, yet we must examine them in light of the New Testament revelation.





Why the Civil and Ceremonial Laws?

God gave His particular people laws that separated them from all the pagans around them. God's people were not to be like the rest of the world because everything about them was supposed to testify to the one true God.



What about Homosexuality?

Because it is such a volatile issue right now, we must understand the context of the biblical law against homosexual activity.

Homosexual behavior is declared sinful in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13. These regulations are sandwiched right between laws against bestiality and incest. Likewise, they were not only for Israel because God said, "Do not make yourselves unclean by any of these things, for by all these the nations I am driving out before you have become unclean" (Lev. 18:24). Notice that the nations being driven out were also accountable for this law.

The inhabitants of Sodom are punished for their wicked behavior (homosexuality) well before the law of Moses was given.

Likewise, the command against homosexuality is repeated in the New Testament in Romans 1:26-27; 1 Timothy 1:9-10; and 1 Corinthians 6:9.

The King James Version translates the word *arsenokoites* as "them that defile themselves with mankind" in 1 Ti. 1:10 and "abusers of themselves with mankind" in 1 Co. 6:9.

But there is no doubt that *arsenokoites* means homosexual. Paul often quoted from the Greek Old Testament because most of the people to whom he was writing were not Jewish. Paul coined the term *arsenokoites* (it had never been used before) by combining two terms from Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 (the two texts about homosexuality.)

Arsenos means "male" and *koites* means "lie with" or "have sex with." Paul coined the term *arsenokoites* by combining the two terms from the Levitical law. It means men who have sex with men.

Since the law against homosexuality appears consistently throughout Scripture, before the law was given, and after Christ died...it is a moral law.

I wrote a thesis on the meaning of the word "homosexual" in 1 Co. 6:9, refuting pro-homosexual arguments. It can be downloaded at https://www.dropbox.com/s/e0eyqucwbtaitf8/arsenokoitai_final_paper-1.docx