

**ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH- Red Bud, Illinois**

Adult Bible Class

*Popular Proverbial Phrases Inspired by Bible Passages*

“An Eye for an Eye and a Tooth for a Tooth” *Lex talionis*

The law of retribution or equal retaliation is included in ancient legal codes (Babylonian Code of Hammurabi from 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC) and is part of our human nature (“don’t get mad, get even”; “revenge is a dish best served cold”). While we might see this law as encouraging revenge, it actually puts a limit on such action, keeping it proportional to the harm that was done originally. “The possibility of monetary compensation for crimes except murder may account for the fact that instances of the implementation of this law are hard to find in the OT.” (International Bible Commentary, page 209)

Exodus 21:22-27 *When men strive together and hit a pregnant woman, so that her children come out, but there is no harm, the one who hit her shall surely be fined, as the woman's husband shall impose on him, and he shall pay as the judges determine. <sup>23</sup> But if there is harm then you shall pay life for life, <sup>24</sup> eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, <sup>25</sup> burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. <sup>26</sup> “When a man strikes the eye of his slave, male or female, and destroys it, he shall let the slave go free because of his eye. <sup>27</sup> If he knocks out the tooth of his slave, male or female, he shall let the slave go free because of his tooth.*

**Who is being protected in verses 22-23?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Does this give us God’s view of the life of \_\_\_\_\_?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who determines what that value is?** \_\_\_\_\_

(This assumes that a pregnant woman must be by definition \_\_\_\_\_.)

**Who administers the fine?** \_\_\_\_\_ (under the control of the society)

**How does this rule speak to slavery?** \_\_\_\_\_

Leviticus 24:17-21 *“Whoever takes a human life shall surely be put to death. <sup>18</sup> Whoever takes an animal's life shall make it good, life for life. <sup>19</sup> If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done it shall be done to him, <sup>20</sup> fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him. <sup>21</sup> Whoever kills an animal shall make it good, and whoever kills a person shall be put to death. <sup>22</sup>You shall have this same rule for the sojourner and for the native, for I am the LORD your God.”*

**What value does God place on human life?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What kind of animal’s life would need to be replaced?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What “addition” to this law do we see in verse 22?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What is the reason given for this rule?** \_\_\_\_\_

Deuteronomy 19:15-21 *“A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. <sup>16</sup> If a malicious witness arises to accuse a person of wrongdoing, <sup>17</sup> then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days. <sup>18</sup> The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, <sup>19</sup> then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. <sup>20</sup> And the rest shall hear and fear and shall never again commit any such evil among you. <sup>21</sup> Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”*

**Is verse 15 still reflected in our own judicial system? \_\_\_\_\_**

**What do verses 16-18 expect there to be in a civil society? \_\_\_\_\_**

What God is establishing here is based on that society being a theocracy, where the culture is governed by a recognition of a divine being who gives the laws.

**What is a false witness called? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Is this still an issue that is taken seriously today? \_\_\_\_\_**

“The law of punishment in kind was merciful. It meant that the punishment must fit the crime—the degree of vengeance could not exceed the degree of original injury. This was not personal vengeance but just punishment following a trial with due process.” (Lutheran Study Bible, page 309)

Matthew 5:38-41 (Sermon on the Mount)

(Jesus said) *“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ <sup>39</sup> But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup> And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup> And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.”*

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus teaches not only the letter but the spirit of God’s law. Jesus gives three examples of not resisting evil: slap on the cheek (insult or injury?); the taking of one’s garment (tunic = inner; cloak = outer); and the going of the extra mile (while carrying something?). Roman military could force someone to carry their baggage but only for a limited distance.

**Are we supposed to let others walk all over us and take advantage of us?**

“Any and every effort to explain these verses in terms of law is bound to fail. We are simply given a picture of how the regenerate (new birth) will behave, if they respond to their new nature...Experience has shown that it is not difficult for a Christian to carry out this section spontaneously, but it is almost impossible as a result of deliberate action” (International Bible Commentary, page 1125). “Jesus removes the impulse of revenge from His disciples’ hearts and bids them live as He Himself lived, in a love that recklessly exposes itself to the lovelessness of the world and the need of men” (Concordia Self-Study Commentary, page 20).