

# Back To Basics

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## **SPECIAL ISSUE: THE TWO COVENANTS**

*Johnie Edwards*

**W**ith the false doctrine floating around that there is “One Continuous Covenant,” we see the need for a special issue of *Back To Basics* dealing with *The Two Covenants*.

**THERE ARE TWO COVENANTS.** Just a casual reading of the Scriptures reveals there are two covenants; not just one! When the apostle Paul challenged those “that desire to be under the law” (Gal. 4:21), he gave them “an allegory” of two women and then said, “For these are the two covenants...” (Gal. 4:22-24).

**IDENTIFYING THE COVENANTS.** Both covenants are called by various terms. One is called: “The first” (Heb. 10:9); “The law” (Jn. 1:17); “The law of Moses” (Acts 13:39); “The old” (Heb. 8:13); “a schoolmaster” (Gal. 3:24-25). The other is referred to as: “The second” (Heb. 10:9); “Grace and truth” (Jn. 1:17); “The law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2); “The new” (Heb. 8:13); “The faith” (Gal. 3:23).

**DEFINING THE WORD.** The word “covenant” means an agreement. It is usually entered into between two persons. In a spiritual sense, it involves God and man. John wrote, “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (Jn. 1:17).

**PURPOSE OF THE LAW.** The law of Moses served to make known sin (Rom. 7:7). The Old Testament law was designed to restrain man from so much sinning. Paul put it this way, “Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions...” (Gal. 3:19). Another purpose of the law was, as a schoolmaster or tutor, “to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Gal. 3:24).

**A CHANGED LAW.** It is written in Hebrews 7:12, “For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.” Jesus, being of the tribe of Judah, could not be priest under the old law (Heb. 7:14; 8:4). He is high priest now (Heb. 4:15). For that to take place, there had to be a change in the law.

**THE FIRST TAKEN AWAY.** God never intended for the first covenant to be lasting. “..It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made” (Gal. 3:19). The apostle to the Hebrews said, “Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will O God. He taketh away the first, that he might establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified...” (Heb. 10:9-10).

## BASIC COMPARISON OF THE TWO COVENANTS

### FIRST COVENANT

- Old covenant (2 Cor. 3:14)
- Given by Moses (Jn. 1:17)
- Given to Israel (Dt. 5:1-3)
- Written on stones (2 Cor. 3:7)
- Shadow of things to come (Heb. 10:1)
- Blood of bulls and goats (Heb. 10:4)
- Animals as dead sacrifices (Heb. 10:1-4)
- Sins remembered each year (Heb. 10:3)
- Oftentimes same sacrifices offered (Heb. 10:11)
- Made nothing perfect (Heb. 7:19)
- Fleshly circumcision (Gen. 17:9-11)
- Ministration of condemnation (2 Cor. 3:9)
- Levitical priesthood (Heb. 7:11)
- Not without fault (Heb. 8:7)
- Yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1-4)
- No justification (Gal. 3:11)
- Abolished (2 Cor. 3:13)

### SECOND COVENANT

- New covenant (2 Cor. 3:6)
- Given by Christ (Heb. 1:1-2)
- Given to all nations (Mt. 28:18-20)
- Written in hearts (2 Cor. 3:3)
- The true (Heb. 8:1-2)
- Blood of Christ (Heb. 9:14)
- Bodies as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1-2)
- Sins remembered no more (Heb. 8:12)
- Christ offered one sacrifice for all (Heb. 10:12)
- Perfect or complete in Christ (Col. 2:10)
- Circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:29)
- Ministration of righteousness (2 Cor. 3:9)
- Each Christian a priest (1 Pet. 2:5)
- Perfect law (Jas. 1:25)
- Law of liberty (Jas. 1:25)
- Justifies (Gal. 3:24)
- Remaineth (2 Cor. 3:11)

# Back To Basics

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# EXPRESSIONS SHOWING THE LAW IS NO LONGER BINDING

John Isaac Edwards

**O**bserve a few expressions showing the law of Moses contained in the Old Testament is no longer binding as a system of law and practice.

**DEAD TO THE LAW AND DELIVERED FROM THE LAW (ROM. 7:1-7).** Using the marriage relationship to teach a law lesson, Paul said, "...ye also are become *dead* to the law.." (v. 4). Again, "...we are *delivered* from the law.." (v. 6). To which law are we dead and from which law have we been delivered, Paul? The law which said, "Thou shalt not covet" (v. 7), a reference to the law of Moses (Ex. 20:17).

**DONE AWAY AND ABOLISHED (2 COR. 3:6-14).** Setting the two testaments side-by-side, Paul said the old testament was "done away" (vv. 7, 11, 14) and "abolished" (v. 13) and that the new testament "remaineth" (v. 11).

**TILL THE SEED SHOULD COME.** Galatians 3:19 affirms the law "...was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come..." (Gal. 3:19). The word "till" suggests the law was only temporary, *till the seed should come*. When we identify the seed, we will have identified the duration of the law. Verse 16 says, "...And to thy seed, which is Christ."

**NO LONGER UNDER A SCHOOLMASTER.** The Scripture says, "...the law was our schoolmaster" and "...we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:24-25). What is the conclusion? We are no longer under the law. If you can see through a barbed wire fence, you can see that!

**BROKEN DOWN AND ABOLISHED (EPH. 2:14-15).** Christ "hath broken down the middle wall of partition..." (Eph. 2:14). The next verse explains, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the

law of commandments contained in ordinances..." (Eph. 2:15). Some attempt to rebuild the wall by going back and keeping various ordinances of the old law. We plead with you to just let the wall lay where the Lord left it.

If the law of Moses is still binding, these expressions must have no meaning! This is not to say the Old Testament is without purpose for us. The same apostle who taught the abolition of the law also taught the value and proper use of the law: "written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4) and "written for our admonition" (1 Cor. 10:11).

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## BEFORE AND AFTER FAITH

Marc W. Gibson

**“B**ut before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” (Gal. 3:23-25).

**CONTEXT.** The passage above comes at the latter end of an exposition by the apostle Paul about the Promise, the Law, and Faith (vv. 15-25). It serves as an excellent overview of God’s scheme of redemption, the divine plan for saving man from sin.

*The Promise* – The promise is God’s promise to Abraham. It was a Seed promise, made to Abraham and his Seed (Christ), and resulted in blessing all nations (vv. 8, 14-18).

*The Law* – The law that was “added” is the law of Moses. It was added later because of sin and confined all under the curse of sin (vv. 10, 17, 19-22). It was temporary until the Seed (Christ) should come (v. 19).

*Faith* – Faith refers to the gospel system under Christ. The promise would find its fulfillment through the gospel (the faith) in justification of those who believe in Jesus Christ (vv. 8, 13-14, 22-25). Since this article deals with things before and after “faith,” more needs to be said about this important aspect of God’s plan.

**FAITH.** The word “faith” is used in two senses in the Scriptures. First, it can refer to the faith, the gospel of Christ, that body of truth revealed by God for man to believe and obey (Rom. 1:5; Jude 3). The second meaning of faith is the

believing response of man to the gospel (Jas. 2:20-22; Eph. 2:8). Our personal faith comes from the faith, that is, our belief in truth is made possible through hearing the revealed gospel of Christ. “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Paul identifies the gospel as “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Rom. 1:16). He further states that in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed “from faith to faith” (v. 17). This is a statement of sequence that identifies the end product and its source. The end which God desires is belief (faith) in the heart of man. The revelation of his righteousness in the gospel (the faith) is the exclusive source of that faith in man that saves. Thus, the divine process is “from faith to faith,” God’s word producing a believing, obedient heart in one willing to receive it.

**BEFORE AND AFTER “FAITH”.** The “faith” in Galatians 3:23-25 is the system of faith contained in the gospel of Christ. This is obvious because this faith is that which was “revealed” (v. 23). This faith “has come” because the gospel has been revealed in its fullness in Christ through the apostles and prophets (Eph. 3:3-5; 1 Cor. 2:10-13; Jude 3). All men now have the opportunity to be justified by faith through Christ (v. 24).

There is a clear distinction between the time before faith and after faith, a distinction represented by two covenants. Examining this distinction will help us appreciate the clear difference between the two covenants. Failure to understand this has led to many doctrinal errors. Please study the following distinctions:

## BEFORE FAITH

### *The Law of Moses*

The law of Moses (Mosaic covenant) was delivered to the children of Israel (Ex. 24:1-12), and continued until Jesus died on the cross (Col. 2:14).

### *The Jewish Nation*

Under the law of Moses, the Jewish nation was God's special people (Ex. 19:5-6), and salvation was of the Jews (Jn. 4:22).

### *Fleshly Circumcision*

Circumcision was required of all males born into the nation of Israel (Lev. 12:3). It was also required of all strangers who wished to partake of the Passover (Ex. 12:44, 48).

### *Animal Sacrifices*

Animal sacrifices were required under the law of Moses in the burnt offering (Lev. 1:2-17), peace offering (Lev. 3), and the sin and trespass offerings (Lev. 4-5).

### *Sins Remembered*

The animal sacrifices served as a "reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Heb. 10:3-4). The priest stood "ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins" (v. 11). Because of this, a "consciousness of sins" was maintained.

### *Sabbath Observed*

The observation of the Sabbath day was commanded in the fourth commandment of the Ten Commandments: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8-11; Dt. 5:12-15; Lev. 26:2). There were also provisions for the land to "keep a Sabbath to the Lord" when the land was allowed to rest in the seventh year (Lev. 25:2-22).

## AFTER FAITH

### *The Law of Christ*

We are "under law toward Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2). The first covenant was taken away so that Christ might establish the second (Heb. 10:9).

### *All Nations*

Under the law of Christ, all men of all nations can become part of God's faithful remnant (Isa. 2:2; Lk. 24:47; Eph. 2:11-22).

### *Circumcision of the Heart*

In Christ, we are "circumcised with the circumcision made without hands" to remove sin from the heart, and this is accomplished when we are buried in baptism (Col. 2:11-12).

### *Spiritual Sacrifices*

God's people now make up a spiritual priesthood to offer up acceptable spiritual sacrifices to God in Christ (1 Pet. 2:5; Rom. 12:1; Heb. 13:15; Phil. 4:18).

### *Sins Remembered No More*

One of the wonderful blessings of the new covenant of Christ is that "their sin I will remember no more" (Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:12). Only through the blood of Jesus is full and eternal redemption obtained (Heb. 9:12). Before faith there was a remembrance of sin, but in Christ there is remission of sin, and no more need for an offering for sin (Heb. 10:18).

### *The First Day of the Week*

After faith came, the "shadows" of the old covenant, such as "sabbaths," passed away (Col. 2:16-17). No New Testament Christian observed the Sabbath as part of the law of Christ. Instead, they gathered for worship on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2). This day was also the day of the Lord's resurrection and establishment of the church.

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## WHAT JESUS SAID ABOUT THE LAW

*Frank Himmel*

**J**esus came to do His Father's will. It is not surprising, therefore, that He often spoke about the law, since it was the expression of God's will that was in force during His lifetime. Jesus said...

**THE LAW SHOULD BE READ.** When some Pharisees criticized Jesus' disciples for picking and eating grain on the Sabbath, part of the Lord's response was, "Have you not read in the law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?" (Mt. 12:5). God gives us revelation so we can know right and wrong. Neglecting it results in ignorance.

**THE LAW COULD BE UNDERSTOOD.** A lawyer once asked what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus' reply was, "What is written in the law? How does it read to you?" (Lk. 10:26). If the lawyer studied the law, he would easily find the answer to His question. (He did know; he was just trying to entrap Jesus.) God's revelation has always been understandable.

**THE LAW WAS BROADER THAN JUST WHAT MOSES SAID PERSONALLY.** Jesus was often accused of blasphemy. On one such occasion, His defense was this: if the law referred to judges as gods because they, in a sense, function as He does, how much more could Jesus, who functions as God to a much greater degree, call Himself God (Jn. 10:34-38). Where did the law say such a thing? In Psalm 82:6. Not only did Jesus cite the Psalms as law, He also often made combined references to "the law and the prophets." All of God's revelation was vital. This is an important point to remember. In our day, some argue that what Jesus said personally is binding, but what is revealed by the apostles is somehow less significant. That is not so.

**THE LAW PROPHESED OF HIM.** "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John" (Mt. 11:13). "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote of Me" (Jn. 8:46). The law prophesied. Moses wrote of Jesus. How so? The law in several ways foreshadowed what Jesus would do. He is our Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7; Ex. 12). He gives us the jubilee of freedom (Lev. 25), in our case from bondage to sin. The book of Hebrews extensively develops the similarities between the Old Testament tabernacle service and Jesus' atonement.

**HE CAME TO FULFILL THE LAW.** "Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill" (Mt. 5:17). Jesus did, in time, abolish the law (Eph. 2:15). But that was at the conclusion of His coming. While on earth, He kept its provisions and accomplished all that it foretold He would. See Luke 24:44-49; Acts 13:27-29.

**THE LAW WOULD SOON BE REPLACED.** A woman asked Jesus which was the correct place of worship: Mt. Gerizim, the Samaritans' practice, or Jerusalem, the Jewish site? The Lord answered in favor of the Jews, but added, "An hour is coming in which neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem" (Jn. 4:21-22). When the Pharisees asked about divorce, and appealed to the law when Jesus told them it was not in God's plan, He replied, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you..." (Mt. 19:8-9). What Moses said was passing away. Jesus would soon exercise all authority. Much of the Lord's teaching anticipated the new era in which we live. Now, we must follow Him.

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## PAUL'S ALLEGORY

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**T**he apostle Paul used an allegory in Galatians 4:21-31 to show the error of demanding people obey the law of Moses in order to be saved (v. 21). Simply put, to do so forfeits the eternal blessings of Christ. In the allegory, Hagar, Sarah, Ishmael and Isaac typify the old and new covenants: "For these are the two covenants" (Gal. 4:23-24). The comparison is extended to affirm this truth: the old covenant has been cast out and is no longer binding upon men. Those who fail to distinguish between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ make a serious blunder. And, those who bind Moses' law in order to be saved do so without God's approval. The allegory shows:

**THE TWO COVENANTS CANNOT BE IN FORCE AT THE SAME TIME.** They do not coexist. The bondwoman, Hagar, gave birth to Ishmael and symbolizes the Mt. Sinai covenant (Gal. 4:24). The freewoman, Sarah, gave birth to Isaac "through promise" and symbolizes the gospel of Christ (Gal. 4:23; Heb. 8:13). Hagar and Sarah did not live together in peace, and neither did their offspring, Ishmael and Isaac. As a result, Hagar and her son, Ishmael, were cast out (Gen. 16:1-6; 21:8-14). This typifies the inability of the old and new covenants to peacefully coexist. Just as Ishmael persecuted Isaac, law-binding Jews persecuted Christians (Gal. 4:29). The answer was not to give in to the law-binding Jew; it was to "cast it out" along with its offspring (Gal. 4:30).

**THE OLD COVENANT PRODUCES BONDAGE, BUT THE NEW COVENANT PROVIDES FREEDOM.** Just like Hagar and Ishmael were in bondage, the law of Moses kept those under it in the bondage of sin (Gal. 4:25; Rom. 3:20-23). There was bondage under the old law; it could not redeem men from

the curse of sin and death (Gal. 3:10-11, 21-23; Heb. 10:4). However, the new covenant of Christ gives freedom from sin (Gal. 4:26; 5:1). Christ redeems sinners "from the curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13). The old law could never do this. So, those who teach that people must live under the law of Moses are teaching people to remain in the bondage of sin! Redemption from sins is only obtained in Christ through the new covenant of His blood (Heb. 9:11-14).

**THE OLD COVENANT DOES NOT PROVIDE AN INHERITANCE OF THE PROMISES OF GOD, BUT CHRISTIANS INHERIT AN ETERNAL INHERITANCE UNDER THE NEW COVENANT.** God's promised blessing to Abraham and his Seed was not given under, nor obtained through, the law of Moses (Gal. 3:15-19). The old law promised death to sinners, not an eternal inheritance (Gal. 3:10, 13, 18). In the gospel, Christ gives the inheritance of eternal life to the children of God (Gal. 3:19-25). Christians are "heirs of the promise" because they are in Christ and follow His covenant—not because they follow the old covenant (Gal. 3:24-29).

**"CAST OUT THE BONDWOMAN AND HER SON!" (GAL. 4:30).** The old covenant cannot save sinners; the gospel of Christ saves the lost (Rom. 1:16). So, cast out the law of bondage and stand fast in the liberty from sin by which Christ has made you free (Gal. 4:30-5:1).

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## IS THERE A DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE LAW OF GOD AND THE LAW OF MOSES?

Donnie V. Rader

**T**hose who contend that we are to keep the Sabbath today say that there is a difference in the *law of Moses* and the *law of God*. They claim that the “ceremonial law” (the sacrifices, feasts, etc.) is the law of Moses that was done away. But the Ten Commandments are the law of God that were not taken away.

**THE LAW OF GOD AND THE LAW OF MOSES ARE THE SAME.** Ezra was told to “bring the Book of the *law of Moses*, which the *LORD had commanded Israel*” (Neh. 8:1, Emphasis mine DVR). Ezra was a “skilled scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given” (Ezra 7:6). The “book of the law of the Lord” was “given by Moses” (2 Chr. 34:14). When Jesus was born, the text says concerning Mary, “Now when the days of her purification according to *the law of Moses* were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is *written in the law of the Lord*, ‘Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD’)” (Lk. 2:22-23, emphasis mine DVR).

**THE LAW THAT WAS DONE AWAY INCLUDED THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.** Paul states that the Jews became “dead to the law” by the death of Christ (Rom. 7:4). Later in the context he identifies that “law” as saying, “You shall not covet” (v. 7). Thus, the Ten Commandments were taken away with the “ceremonial law”.

**THE TEN COMMANDMENTS WERE ATTRIBUTED TO MOSES.** “For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death’” (Mk. 7:10).

**THERE ARE THINGS IN THE LAW OF GOD THAT ARE NOT FOUND IN THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.** “The king also appointed a portion of his possessions for the burnt offerings: for the morning and evening burnt offerings, the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths and the New Moons and the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the LORD” (2 Chr. 31:3). Again, Luke 2:22-23 says “the law of the Lord” stated, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the LORD.” That was not found in the Ten Commandments.

**THERE IS A CONTRAST BETWEEN TWO COVENANTS, NOT THREE.** Hebrews 8:7-13 draws a contrast between “first” (vv. 7 & 13) and “second” (v. 7). These two covenants are also referred to as the “old” and “new” (vv. 8 & 13). There is no contrast or comparison between three covenants: The law of Moses, the law of the Lord and the new law.

The distinction between the law of Moses and the law of God is an arbitrary one.

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## WHAT THE NEW COVENANT SAYS

*Jesse Flowers*

**J**ehovah declared to the Jews under the first covenant, “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Jer. 31:17). Those days came with the arrival and departure of Jesus Christ. With the establishment of the new covenant, some very key events took place. For instance, the new covenant says...

**THAT OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY HAS BEEN FULFILLED.** Jesus declared to the multitudes, “Do not think that I came 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” (Mt. 5:17-18). Following His resurrection, the Lord said to His disciples, “These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Lk. 24:44). Jesus promised that the law of Moses would not pass away until all had been fulfilled, and it has.

**THAT GOD HAS PROVIDED SOME BETTER THINGS FOR US.** The author of Hebrews revealed that Christ “has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises” (Heb. 8:6; 7:19, 22; 9:23; 11:35, 40; 12:24). There are many ways in which the new covenant is better than the old. Namely, the death of Christ atones for all of our sins, and His law meets all of our needs. Also the promises pertaining to the new covenant are “exceedingly great and precious” (2 Pet. 1:1-4).

**THAT JESUS CHRIST CAN NOW BECOME HIGH PRIEST.** Jesus “arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses

spoke nothing concerning priesthood” (Heb. 7:14). Jesus was a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, not the Levitical priesthood. “For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law” (Heb. 7:11). Christ is a merciful and faithful High Priest that sympathizes with our weaknesses (Heb. 2:17-18; 4:14-16). Let us be thankful that such a One “lives to make intercession for” us (Heb. 7:25).

**THAT JESUS DIED.** It was impossible for the new covenant to be established until the death of Jesus. “For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives” (Heb. 9:16-17). It was dedicated with the precious blood of Christ (Heb. 9:18; Mt. 26:28). So men were not subject to its laws until the Savior died.

**THAT THE FIRST COVENANT WAS NAILED TO THE CROSS.** Jesus “wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Col. 2:14). Paul said, “we have been delivered from the law” (Rom. 7:6). The Hebrew writer penned, “In that He says, ‘A new covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:13). These passages make the same point, and that is, the old covenant has been removed and replaced with the new covenant. The first covenant is no longer the law that men are to obey. To observe the Sabbath, burn incense, tithe, and use mechanical instruments in worship today is to practice that which has been nailed to the cross.

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# THE PRIESTHOOD BEING CHANGED

David Eldridge

**O**ne of the greatest proofs that there has been a law change is the change in the priesthood. The Hebrew writer penned, “For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well” (Heb. 7:12). The law of Moses governed the qualifications for the priests and the sacrifices they offered. If there was a change in the priesthood from the way it was regulated under Moses’ law, then this would prove that there had been a change from that law. Consider some of the changes from the Levitical priesthood to the High Priesthood of Christ that evidence a change in the law.

**A CHANGE IN THE PRIESTLY TRIBE.** Under the old law, the priests came from the tribe of Levi, being “called according to the order of Aaron” (Ex. 29:9; Heb. 7:11). “Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood” of any tribe other than Levi (Heb. 7:14). God’s silence regarding any other tribe serving as priests legislated that Levi was the only tribe from which the priests could come as long as the law of Moses was in effect. Jesus was “called by God as High Priest” (Heb. 5:10). Yet Jesus was not of the tribe of Levi, but “...belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For...our Lord arose from Judah” (Heb. 7:13-14). Thus, when God made “a change in the priesthood” from Levi to Judah, “there is necessarily a change in the law as well” from the law of Moses to the new law of Christ (Heb. 7:12). The change in the priestly tribe necessarily means that the law has also been changed.

**A CHANGE FROM WEAK MEN TO THE PERFECT SON OF GOD.** The apostle writes, “For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever” (Heb. 7:28). There are a number of significant

differences between the weak men whom the law appointed as priests and Christ Jesus who was “appointed” by the Father as the “High Priest of our confession” (Heb. 3:1-2).

*First, the law appointed “many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing” (Heb. 7:23).* Under the duration of Moses’ law, there were many priests because they were all men who died and needed to be replaced. However, our eternal Lord “because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood” (Heb. 7:24).

*Second, the high priests under the law offered “up sacrifices, first for His own sins...”—they were sinners (Heb. 7:27).* Yet, our High Priest Jesus is “without sin” as He “is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens” (Heb. 4:15; 7:26).

*Third, according to the law, the priests were “on earth” and performed their service in an “earthly sanctuary” (Heb. 8:4; 9:1).* There has been a change in that Jesus is the “High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man” (Heb. 8:1-2).

The change from the priesthood of mortal and sinful men here on earth to the Priesthood of Jesus who is in Heaven, undefiled, and eternal, is further evidence that the law has been changed.

**A CHANGE IN THE SACRIFICES OFFERED.** “Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices” (Heb. 8:3). The change in the priesthood can also be seen in the difference between the sacrifices that were offered by the

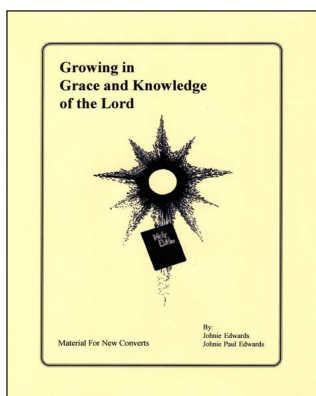
priests under the law and the sacrifice offered by Jesus, our High Priest. What they sacrificed was different. Under Moses, priests offered “the blood of bulls and goats” “according to the law” (Heb. 10:4, 8). This is in contrast to Jesus who, “with His own blood...entered the Most Holy Place” (Heb. 9:12). There was also a change in the efficacy of the sacrifice offered. Since “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins,” the priests under the old law were offering “sacrifices, which can never take away sins” (Heb. 10:4, 11). On the other hand, Jesus “put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb. 9:26). And, since Jesus’ sacrifice of His blood takes away sin, it also meant the frequency of the sacrifice was changed. Under Moses’ law, “Every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices” since the blood of the animals sacrificed could not truly

take sins away (Heb. 10:11). However, our High Priest “after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God...for by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Heb. 10:12-14). The change in the priesthood is seen as we note these differences in the sacrifices which were offered, thus we know the law has been changed.

Let us be thankful that the priesthood being changed shows us that “there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness” for it is by this annulling of the law that “there is the bringing in of a better hope” (Heb. 7:18-19).

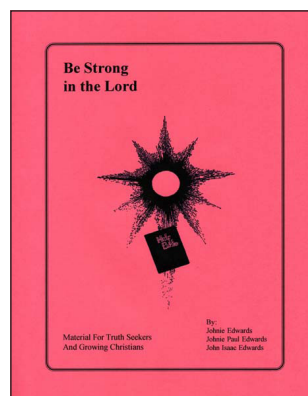
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# WHAT THE NEW COVENANT DOES THAT THE OLD COULDN'T

Mike Webb

**T**he new covenant is a better covenant than the first (Heb. 8:6). It is a better covenant because it can do things that the old covenant could not do. Consider with me some things that the new covenant can do that the old couldn't.

**TAKES AWAY SIN.** The sacrifices offered under the first covenant could not take away sins. The Hebrew writer wrote, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin (Heb. 10:3-4). Christ offered the perfect sacrifice under the new covenant and made possible the forgiveness of sins. He "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 10:26).

**MAKES ITS SUBJECTS PERFECT.** The Levitical priesthood (Heb. 7:11) and the law of Moses (Heb. 7:19) could not provide "perfection." It left man in his sin and separated from God. If perfection had been possible under the old law, there would have been no need for another high priest or for a change of the law (Heb. 7:11-12). When Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice, He "perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). Christ, with one offering, did what the millions of sacrifices offered under the old law could not do.

**JUSTIFIES.** No one could be justified by the law of Moses. Paul wrote, "that no one can be justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for 'the just shall live by faith'" (Gal. 3:11). It was impossible to be justified by the old covenant because it required perfect obedience (Gal. 3:12) and all have sinned (Rom. 3:23). The old law served as our tutor in order to bring us to Christ so that we can be justified by faith (Gal. 3:24). Since faith has come, we are no longer under the tutor (Gal.

3:25). By submitting to Christ through faith, we can be justified from all the things that one could not be justified by the law of Moses (Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:28; Gal. 2:16).

**PURGES THE CONSCIENCE.** The gifts and sacrifices under the law of Moses could not make those who performed the service perfect with regard to conscience (Heb. 9:9). Since the old covenant could not take away sins, the worshipers always had a consciousness of sins (Heb. 10:2). Since the sacrifice of Christ completely takes our sins away, we can have a clean and pure conscience (Heb. 9:14). We can draw near to God with full assurance of faith because our consciences have been cleansed (Heb. 10:22).

**PROVIDES THE WAY INTO THE HOLIEST OF ALL.** The tabernacle built by Moses in the wilderness was comprised of two parts: the Holy Place and the Holiest of All (Heb. 9:6-7). These two parts were separated by a veil. This separation was symbolic of the fact that "the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was standing" (Heb. 9:8). The Holiest of All was symbolic of heaven (Heb. 9:12, 24). The first covenant did not provide a way to heaven and eternal fellowship with God. Jesus, however, through His blood, opened the way into the Holiest (Heb. 10:19-20). The second covenant provided a way to heaven that the first could not.

The second covenant is, without a doubt, superior to the first. It can do things that the first simply could not do.

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## A BETTER COVENANT

*Craig Thomas*

If someone asked me to sum up the book of Hebrews in one word, I would say, “better.” The theme of Hebrews is easily discerned; Christ’s dispensation is “better”; therefore, “don’t fall away.” Let’s very briefly consider some ways the new is “better” than the old.

**BETTER HOPE (7:19).** The law of Moses was only a temporary arrangement (Gal. 3:19, 23-25) that did not justify man (Gal. 3:21; Rom. 3:20) because of man’s inability to keep it (Rom. 8:3). Its sacrifices could not: make one “perfect,” remove the “consciousness of sins,” or “take away sins” (Heb. 10:1-4). But under the new we are “a holy priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:5), able to “draw near to God” (Heb. 7:19) “in full assurance of faith” with a clean conscience (Heb. 10:22), offer “acceptable” spiritual sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), become “sons” and “heir” (Gal. 4:5-7), enter the “true tabernacle” (Heb. 8:2; 10:19), worship Him “in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:24), and “rejoice in the hope of the glory of God” because we’ve “been justified by faith” and “have peace with God” (Rom. 5:1-2).

**BETTER COVENANT (7:22).** First, unlike the old, the new is “faultless” (Heb. 8:7). The first was not inherently faulty (Rom. 7:12), but was faulty, e.g., in the sense that it was temporary (Gal. 3:19), could not give “life” (Gal. 3:21), and could not justify man (Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16). Further, the new is better than the old because it is built upon “better promises” (Heb. 8:6); namely, unlike the old, under the new: A) God puts His laws in our mind and writes them on our hearts (Heb. 8:10; Jn. 6:45; Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23), B) God is truly our God and we His people (Heb. 8:10; 1 Pet. 2:4-9; 2 Pet. 2:1-11), C) “all shall know” Him as a requisite for entrance into His kingdom (Heb. 8:11; 11:6), and D) God no longer remembers our sins (Heb. 8:12; 10:1-4).

**BETTER SACRIFICES (9:23).** Under the old, in spite of the purity or plentitude of sacrifices, sins were continually remembered with further sacrifices, men’s consciences were never fully purged, nor were sins taken away (Heb. 10:1-4). But under the new, Jesus offered the one perfect sacrifice (Heb. 9:12-14) that, among other things, obliterates the “faulty” old covenant (Heb. 8:7; 10:9; Col. 2:14), cleanses our consciences “from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb. 9:14), establishes Christ as “the Mediator of the new covenant” (Heb. 9:15), and allows us to “receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15).

**BETTER “SURETY” (7:22).** “...Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.” *Surety* denotes the idea of a security or bondsman. Christ’s priesthood, unlike the Levitical (Ex. 28:1), was established by God’s oath (Heb. 7:17, 21). Hence, Christ serves as an immutable guarantee that, unlike the old priesthood, the new priesthood will never be changed (Heb. 7:24), will be utterly efficacious in making us “perfect” (Heb. 12:23), “justified” (Acts 13:39), and secure our eternal salvation (Heb. 7:25). Further, Christ’s priesthood is “superior” to the Levitical since Christ’s is based upon “the power of an endless life” versus “the law of a fleshly commandment” (Heb. 7:16). Hence, Christ has become the High Priest who absolutely and completely “meets our need” (Heb. 7:26); because He is “perfected forever” (Heb. 7:28), and fully qualified to: sit at God’s “right hand” (Heb. 8:1), serve in the “sanctuary, the true tabernacle” (Heb. 8:2), and be mediator of the new covenant which “is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises” (Heb. 8:6).

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# Kids Activity Page

Aleisha Edwards

## The Two Covenants

Draw a line from the statement on the right to the Testament it goes with on the left.

**Old Testament**

Sins remembered no more (Heb. 8:12)

Made nothing perfect (Heb. 7:19)

Schoolmaster (Gal. 3:24)

Given by Christ (Heb. 1:1-2)

First covenant (Heb. 8:7)

Given by Moses (Jn. 1:17)

Second covenant (Heb. 8:7)

Given to all (Mt. 28:18-20)

Abolished (2 Cor. 3:13)

Till the seed (Gal. 3:19)

Perfect (Col. 2:10)

Remains (2 Cor. 3:11)

**New Testament**

**"Suffer the little children to come unto me,  
and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14).**

## CONSEQUENCES OF KEEPING THE LAW OF MOSES

*Jerry Fite*

**H**ave you ever stopped to consider the consequences of keeping the law of Moses?

**ONE BECOMES A DEBTOR TO DO THE WHOLE LAW.** You cannot pick and choose your favorite precept of the law of Moses and ignore the rest of the law. If one receives circumcision, Paul says, He is under obligation to keep the whole law (Gal. 5:3).

**ONE IS PLACED IN BONDAGE.** All that the law of Moses could do is condemn you of your sin when you failed in just one point of the law (Rom. 7:7). With no provision in the law of Moses to make one righteous, one who seeks the law of Moses for justification is placed under an unbearable yoke of bondage (Acts 15:10).

**MAKES THE DEATH OF CHRIST VAIN.** Paul writes, "...if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died needlessly" (Gal. 2:21). Christ died to justify us apart from the law of Moses.

**CAUSES ONE TO FALL FROM GRACE.** If we seek to be justified by keeping the Ten Commandments, then we are "severed" from Christ and have "fallen from Grace" (Gal. 5:4). Why? The law came through Moses, but "grace and truth" came through Jesus Christ (Jn. 1:17).

**CAUSES PAUL'S LABOR TO BE VAIN.** Seeing the people he taught keep the law regarding "days, and months and seasons and years", Paul feared that his "labor was in vain" (Gal. 4:10-11). Paul worked diligently to not allow the law of Moses to be mixed in any way with justification in Christ. These elements of the law were "weak" and "worthless" in the realm of man's justification in Christ (Gal. 4:9).

### **CAUSES FALSE DOCTRINE TO BE ACCEPTED.**

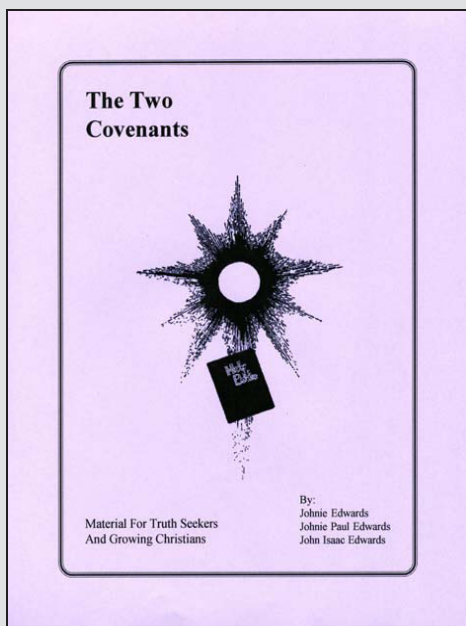
Thinking that we should keep the law of Moses opens the door to accepting false doctrines regarding New Testament worship. For example, the law demanded tithing, or giving 10% to God. Under the gospel, God has not commanded tithing but has demanded that His people give "as they have been prospered" (1 Cor. 16:2). Under the law of Moses, God's people were authorized to praise God in song accompanied by mechanical instruments of music. Under the gospel, God wants His people to praise Him in song by "singing and making melody with your heart" (Eph. 5:19). Not respecting the distinction between the law of Moses and the gospel, allows one to not be alarmed when the Protestant preacher demands tithing and praises the mechanical instruments of music in the worship services.

**SHOWS DISRESPECT CONCERNING THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST.** At Jesus' transfiguration, Moses the lawgiver and the great Old Testament prophet Elijah were present with Jesus in the mountain. With a shadowing cloud, the voice of God pointed out Jesus as His Son and demanded that all "hear him" (Mt. 17:5). When the cloud lifted, the disciples saw only Jesus standing before them. We listen to Him today, not Moses or Elijah. Jesus has all authority today (Mt. 28:18). Paul honored the authority of Christ by understanding what law he was under. He was not under the law of Moses, "but under the law of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:21-21). As Paul honored the authority of Christ, we should do likewise and recognize we are under the law of Christ today, not the law of Moses.

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