

# The New Covenant

By Leon King

**A** young man asked, "Are we in a covenant relationship with our God?" He continued, "and, if so, what covenant?" "Are we obligated to keep the law? The Ten Commandments? Are the Ten Commandments our rule for life—that is, the rule of life for believers? How much of the Old Covenant is binding on us as New Testament believers?" These were, and are, sincere and appropriate questions—questions that many of us ask, or have asked in days past.

Our Bible is divided into two testaments or covenants – the Old Testament and the New Testament. The nation of Israel was given the Old Testament which is the same as the Law Covenant at Mount Sinai. God gave that Old Covenant to Moses as the mediator between Him and the nation of Israel. (Gal. 3:19) The book of Jeremiah tells us of a New Covenant which the LORD will make with both the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. This New Covenant would be totally different from the covenant which God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai. Let me insert this here: I consider the New Covenant to be the same as the Everlasting Covenant to which the Hebrew writer refers in this verse:

**Heb 13:20-21 (KJV)** *Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the **everlasting covenant**, 21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

Let's read the prophecy concerning the New Covenant:

*Jeremiah 31:31-34 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day [that] I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land*

*of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: 33 But this [shall be] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

The Prophet Jeremiah penned the book carrying his name while he prophesied to Judah both before and during Judah's 70-years of captivity in Babylon. He remained in the land prophesying to the poor remnant and later went down into Egypt. At this point in the history of Israel, the southern Kingdom, Judah of which Jeremiah was a part, was under the first covenant – the Law Covenant.

Israel was God's covenant nation and was, at this time, under the Law Covenant. Jeremiah spoke of a new covenant with both the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. We know that the northern kingdom of Israel, known as the house of Israel was carried away into Assyria, and placed in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes (2Ki. 17:6) by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria about 721 B. C. The point is that the new covenant spoken of by Jeremiah was to be with both the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Has this covenant begun?

We are not left to wonder when we read the 8th and 10th chapters of Hebrews. The New Covenant with both the house of Israel and the house of Judah was in effect in gospel times. For that matter, it still is, and those to whom God has given this covenant enjoy the blessings of it.

This covenant was called "new," not because it was newly made, for it was with the elect in Christ from everlasting. In other words, the new covenant made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah is the same

as the everlasting covenant. It was called new because it was totally different from the law covenant and was, in the words of the writer of Hebrews, a “better covenant with better sacrifices and better promises and a better hope.” This passage from the book of Hebrews speaks of that New Covenant.

**Hebrews 8:6-12** *But now hath he [Jesus Christ – my insert, lk] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. 7 For if that first [covenant] had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. 8 For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: 9 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10 For this [is] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: 11 And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*

**Hebrews 10:15-17** *[Whereof] the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 16 This [is] the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; 17 And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

The Hebrew writer tells us that Jesus Christ is the mediator of a better covenant, established on better promises. The law covenant said “do and live.” This new covenant – the everlasting covenant – says “live and do.”

The old covenant or law covenant was a conditional covenant. Israel, under that covenant, was obliged to keep the terms of the covenant. They said, *All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.* (Exo. 24:7). The problem is that the Israelites *could not* and *did not* keep the covenant. They could not because the covenant, which was good and just, was weak through the flesh. The same is true of you and me—we can never hope to keep the Ten Commandments for the commandment being good and just and holy is weak through our flesh. The Law Covenant gave commands, but gave no power to perform the demands of it. It condemned the unjust—those who had broken the law, but had no power to save.

The New Covenant is totally different from the Law Covenant. The everlasting covenant is an *unconditional* covenant. God elect are the beneficiaries of the New Covenant. The elect have *absolutely no* conditions to meet according to the terms of the New Covenant which God has provided. The LORD said that the new covenant should *not* be *according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day [that] I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them . . .* (Jer. 31:32). Not according to? what does that mean? The term “not according to” means: *Not in agreement with; not suitable to or agreeable to.* No, beloved! The new covenant, in no way shape or form resembled the Old Covenant. The New Covenant is an UNCONDITIONAL covenant! Is not this the whole point of the book of Hebrews?

- **What are the Unconditional Terms of the New Covenant?**

*But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: after those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; . . .*

God puts his law in their inward parts, and writes it in their hearts. This is not a thing that believers do for themselves. It is the work of God

totally and absolutely. This is what happens in the new birth which is a sovereign act of God for it is *not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.* (Jo. 1:13). It comes to us in a manner and a time that is not discerned by the observing world – for *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that born of the Spirit.* (Jo. 3:8). This is the new beginning of God's elect. They are born of God! The old man is not made over or re-born. A new man is born in them! Yes, there is born in them a . . . *new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* (Eph. 4:24). Look at that! A new man created in righteousness and true holiness! A new man is in us who is incapable of sin. This is a part of us that *cannot sin, because he is born of God.* (1Jo. 3:9; 5:18). *Cannot sin* means that the new man is not capable of it. *Cannot sin* is used in the very same way that God *cannot lie* is used. God is incapable of lying!

We have no more active part in our spiritual birth than we did with our own physical birth. We did not choose it; we did not plan a time for it; we dictated no terms about it at all; we simply received a new life from God. Thus, the LORD puts his law in our inward parts and writes it in our hearts. (Jer. 31:33). His law – James calls the perfect law of liberty. That law is stated in the whole of the New Covenant or the New Testament. The gospel of the kingdom tells us how to walk in order to follow His steps. That law of liberty is our guide after the new birth. That law is . . . *written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.* (2Co. 3:3). Many think that those who are the beneficiaries of this covenant are still under the law – the law expressed in the Ten Commandments. According to God's stated terms of the New Covenant, there is absolutely no work or action a sinner can take in order for God to put His law into the inward parts and write it in his heart. It is a sovereign act done by the LORD, simply because He is pleased to do it.

The Bible tells us that the Ten Commandments was the covenant God made with Israel.

*And the LORD said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for **after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel.** And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And **he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.*** (Exo. 34:27-28).

In other words, the Ten Commandments was the covenant. The judgments which followed the giving of the Ten Commandments was an explanation or implementation of those commandments to Israel (See Exodus, chapters 21—24).

This writer believes that New Covenant believers are NOT under the Old Covenant in any sense. The Old Testament Priesthood which was set up under the Law Covenant was superseded by the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The priesthood was changed therefore the Hebrew writer tells us that, because the priesthood was changed, there was of necessity a change of the law.

*"For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."* (Heb. 7:12).

The New Covenant believer has a new and greater explanation of God's law inasmuch as the Lord Jesus' commandments addressed more than actions. The Ten Commandments are not the standard or rule of life for the child of God under the New Covenant. No, we follow the perfect law of liberty. That perfect law of liberty also speaks of the attitudes of the heart. Here are a couple of examples from the Sermon on the Mount.

*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his*

*brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. (Mat. 5:21-22).*

*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (Mat. 5:27-28).*

These are but two examples of many, many which could be given in the explanation of the New Covenant. Anger, lustful looks, bitterness, evil speaking, malice, and corrupt communication out of our mouths are some of the things the Lord has bidden us put away from ourselves as his dear children. Those things—thoughts and attitudes—are magnified in the New Covenant or New Testament.

Is it not true that we, the believers of the New Covenant, cannot keep the law because of the weakness of our flesh? The harder we try to keep all the law—that is, the Ten Commandments, the more we fail. And why? Because the Law Covenant was not capable of giving life and strength! We can never measure up to God’s standard, which is perfection, by the works of the law. What did the Apostle Paul say about this?

*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but [how] to perform that which is good I find not. (Rom. 7:18).*

But, is it not true that we, as believers, are *dead to the law* by the body of Christ? If we be dead with Christ, then the law no longer has dominion over us. Dead men are under no law! The law cannot condemn them! How can the law accuse a dead man?

*Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? **2** For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to [her] husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of [her] husband. **3** So then if, while [her] husband liveth, she*

*be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. 4 Wherefore, my brethren, **ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, [even] to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*** (Rom 7:1-4).

When Jesus Christ died, we died with him! When he was buried, we were buried with him! When he was raised, we were raised with him. When he ascended, we ascended with him and are seated with him in heaven.

Are we dead with Him?

*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* (Gal. 2:20).

*Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with [him], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.* (Rom. 6:6).

If we are dead with him, then are we not dead to the law? Does not the law have dominion over a man as long as he is living? But, if he be dead, he is freed from that law. We live, brethren, but the life we now live is not our own, but Christ in us! And how do we live it? By the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave himself for us! So, our life is a life of faith.

We are set free from the curse of the law by the body of Christ! We are free from the law in order to grow in the Spirit—and to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We live our lives under grace by faith.



To live a life by faith is the same as the pre-law covenant heroes of faith lived. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain! By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death! By faith Noah, built an ark to the saving of his house and condemned the world! By faith Abraham, when he was called, went out to a place which he should after receive for an inheritance. Through faith also Sarah received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age; And why? Because she judged him faithful that promised! By faith Jacob – by faith Issac – all before the giving of the Law Covenant at Mount Sinai! What covenant were they under? Surely it was not the Law Covenant which was given to Moses at Mt. Sinai! These heroes of faith believed God! No, they were not under the Law Covenant. We do agree that the law of God was written in their conscience as the scriptures indicate. While the nation of Israel was given the Law Covenant written and engraven in stones, the Gentiles—that is, all others, had the essence of that law written in their consciences.

*. . . the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and [their] thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) (Rom. 2:14-15).*

These pre-law saints were not Israelites. No, that nation had its beginning in the land of Egypt. These were the sons of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel. So, it would be proper to say that, since they were not Israelites, they were gentiles. It is not to say that the Israelites did not have the law of God written in their consciences, but they had it given them on tables of stone, written by the finger of God as a covenant to them.

Like the pre-law saints, the children of God, under the New Covenant, walk by faith. We are set free from the law to follow our example and savior!

Jesus Christ is not only our savior, but he is the model and example to the believer! He has given us, who have experienced the forgiveness of sins, an example that we should follow his steps and walk even as He walked.

*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: (1Pe. 2:21-22).*

*He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. (1Jo. 2:6).*

Now, let us get back to the promises and provisions of the New Covenant. The Covenant says:

- **He will be their God – and they shall be his people.**

Because the LORD chooses, he will be the God of those in whom He puts his law – and those same ones shall (positively, without question) be his people. These are his people in a sense like no other people on earth; they are a distinct, special, and peculiar people: a people near unto the Lord.

- **Every man of this covenant shall know the LORD, from the least unto the greatest of them.**

*And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD; . . . Under the Law Covenant, the LORD gave Israel teachers to instruct them in the ways of the covenant. Moses and Aaron were the first of those teachers.*

**Exodus 24:12** *And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them.*

**Leviticus 10:8, 11** *And the LORD spake unto Aaron, saying, . . . And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.*

No person, under the terms of the new covenant, shall say, *Know the LORD: . . .* simply because the LORD brings his people to himself in the New Birth so that they know the Lord! The preachers of the gospel – the New Covenant – bring life and immortality to light through the preaching of the gospel. It is blessedly true that . . . *whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* Some, out of the masses of mankind shall hear and believe. Those who believe the gospel message are those whose hearts have been prepared of the LORD to hear it and embrace it. For most, the message that is preached to all men without discrimination falls on deaf ears because those who *will not* hear do not have *ears to hear*. Men in their natural state are incapable of understanding spiritual things—and the gospel is a spiritual message. Why are they incapable? Men are naturally *dead in trespasses and in sins*—and except they be born again can never perceive nor can they enter into the kingdom of God.

How great a blessing this is! To be in a covenant relationship with the LORD God, the Great, I AM! Think of it, beloved – Our God is *merciful to our unrighteousness, and our sins and our iniquities will He remember no more.* Our sins and transgressions are all under the precious blood of Christ! He bare them in His own body on the tree, and they are carried away never to be remembered against us again. We are set free from sin and given new life with a hope that is both sure and steadfast. We are at liberty and free to follow the steps of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Are we then without law? God forbid! His law is written in our heart and we have the *perfect law of liberty – the royal law* as given us in the whole of the New Testament! That royal law is an elaborate explanation of the meaning of God's Holy Law. The essence of that law is seen in this passage from Matthew.

**Matthew 22:37-40** *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. 38*

*This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second [is] like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 40 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

Every commandment of the Lord in the New Testament is an explanation or elaboration of some part of these two statements. Every statement contained in the Ten Commandments which was given to Israel as the basic law covenant is reiterated in the New Covenant except for the 4th commandment – the Sabbath. These commandments are our guide for life. Are we under a Sabbath? No, we are not! If, beloved, we are under the Old Covenant, then the Seventh Day Adventists are right! We are obliged to remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy! If we are under any part of that law as a covenant, then we are obliged to obey it all. There is no example of the church keeping a Sabbath; there is no commandment in the New Covenant to keep a Sabbath.

The churches of the New Testament did not meet on the Sabbath day, but they met on the first day of the week. Most of us have been saturated with the commandments of men who draw from the Old Covenant and our consciences have been trained to be Sabbath keepers. Some good brethren believe that the Sabbath was changed to another day. Some think that Hebrews 4:4-11 speaks of a change from the 7th day Sabbath to the 1st day of the week. We do agree that Joshua did not give the Israelites rest and spoke of another day. That day, it seems to this writer, is the day of salvation. A day can be a special time which the day of salvation is.

**Heb. 3:15** *While it is said, **To day** if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.*

**Heb. 3:7-8** *Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, **To day** if ye will hear his voice, **8** Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness:*

Yes, there is left a Sabbath keeping, as shown in Hebrews 4:9, for you and I as God's dear children. That rest or Sabbath keeping is the Lord Jesus

Christ himself who is our rest. For when we enter into our rest, we cease from our own works, do we not? The truth is, that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Sabbath rest.

If we are obliged to keep the Sabbath, then we are obliged to keep the whole Law Covenant! For if we break one part of the law, we are guilty of all of it! That very idea defeats the blessed promises of the New Covenant! It is not a walk under the tables of stone—but a faith walk. So, then, precisely what is the believer's rule of life?

This preacher believes Jesus Christ is our supreme example for our walk. We have been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus. We are set free from the curse of the law to walk a life of faith.

**1Co. 6:9-11** *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: **but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.***

When we would accuse others who say they are not under the Law Covenant of being without law, we have to ask: "Do we mean they are without law in principle or in a practical sense? Do their lives demonstrate that they are rebels or lawbreakers? Is the walk of these brethren a walk contrary to the commandments of our Lord? While all of God's children agree to the stumbling and failings of their walk of faith—they are assured that it is a far better way to walk than under the condemnation of a law they could never hope to keep. Nay, its purpose brethren, was fulfilled and continues to be fulfilled in those who are under it. How?

**Galatians 3:19** *Wherefore then [serveth] the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the*

*promise was made; [and it was] ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.*

## **· Are Gentiles Under the New Covenant?**

Do we hear an objection saying, “Yes, but that New Covenant was to be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” Indeed it was! As we have mentioned in the beginning of this article, the new covenant began with the beginning of the gospel. The covenant was ratified by our Lord Jesus Christ when he shed His blood on the cross for the elect – His people. It is called the blood of the everlasting covenant (Heb. 13:20). So, how is it that we, as gentiles, become partakers of the covenant?

Let’s think a minute. When the Lord Jesus Christ founded his church during his earthly ministry – the church at Jerusalem - the church was composed entirely of Israelites. We read of no gentiles being brought into a church relationship until after the scattering of the church at Jerusalem by the persecution of Saul. Churches sprang up at the persecution of Saul over the regions of Judaea, Samaria, and, later, unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The gentiles were brought into the Covenant – grafted in. Because of the unbelief of some of those in Israel, they were broken off from the covenant relationship. The gentiles were grafted in among them and became partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree. (Rom. 11:17). Israel had and has every advantage in that all of God’s promises were made to Israel! The nation of Israel had, and have, every advantage, for to them pertains the . . . *adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.* (Rom. 9:4-5). Israel has been set aside for a time – and blinded. *Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather*

*through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. (Rom. 11:11).*

The Gentiles' grafting into the covenant is a major part of the subject of the 11th chapter of Romans. You and I, beloved, are, by an act of our God, grafted into that New Covenant made with Israel and Judah in the Gospel.

God is not finished with Israel. They have been set aside until the fullness of the Gentiles be brought into the covenant relationship. Then, the Lord will bring them back for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.

**Rom. 11:25-26** *For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. 26 And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob:*

Brethren, we are free from the law by the body of Christ! He has fulfilled every demand of God's righteous law in our behalf. We have been set free from the bondage of sin. We died with Christ, were buried with him, and have been raised to walk in newness of life. If the Son make you free, then are ye free indeed! So, brethren, stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. What is that yoke of bondage? It is the law covenant which neither Jew nor Gentile could bear.

No wonder Paul told the Galatians to stand fast in the liberty from the yoke of bondage! He said:

**Gal. 5:1-4, in part** . . . *For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

This writer cannot believe that, as a partaker of the New Covenant, he is under a curse. And why? Can anyone doubt that the Apostle Paul speaks of the Law Covenant and its attendant curse?

**Galatians 3:13** *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed [is] every one that hangeth on a tree:*

**Galatians 3:10** *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed [is] every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*