

# Understanding the Foundations

## Chapter 4

### Walking in Covenant

In the last chapter, we said that our understanding of who Israel is will determine how we view all of scripture. In fact, our understanding of who Israel is, even determines who we understand ourselves to be. We saw that the New Testament says that, when we come to faith in Christ, we are grafted into the people of Israel and thus we are Israel! This is an incredibly radical shift because we suddenly realize that all those verses that say, “*Say to the people of Israel...*” are actually speaking to us.

Depending on your denominational background, this may completely turn your world upside down. To make things even more challenging, you probably also have many preconceived ideas of what it would mean to live according to the Old Testament... and many of those ideas may be extremely negative. However, nothing our God does is ever negative. In this chapter, we will look at the basics of living as a citizen of God’s people Israel.

#### A God of Covenants

Throughout the scriptures, we see God making covenants. This was a language that ancient peoples understood very well but it has become a foreign concept in our culture. Covenants are somewhat like contracts but they go far deeper than just a “mutually binding agreement to provide goods and services at an agreed upon schedule of prices.” Covenants involve the giving of oneself to another in such a way that two parties may become one with no escape clauses. The closest thing to it in our culture are the words of the traditional wedding vow.

*I, Richard take thee, Carol, to be my wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, forsaking all others till death us do part.*

When people think about the beginning of Israel they usually think about the giving of the “Ten Commandments.” However, the actual foundation of Israel was, incredibly, God approached a man to make a covenant.

*<sup>1</sup> Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” <sup>4</sup> So Abram went, as the LORD had told him...* Genesis 12:1-4 (ESV)

The terms of this covenant for Abram were simple, “Go.” The next verse says, “Abram went.” God then responded to Abram’s obedience, by revealing a little bit more of how He planned to fulfill His part of the covenant to Abram.

*Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. Genesis 12:7 (ESV)*

Scripture doesn't tell us why God chose Abram out of all the millions of people in the world. However, throughout Abram's life, we see an unmistakable pattern of trust and obedience which vastly exceeds my own. God knows the deepest thoughts of our hearts and He is seeking those who will follow Him.

*For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless toward him... 2 Chronicles 16:9 (ESV)*

### Unconditional Love

A phrase that is very popular in the Church today is “The Unconditional Love of God.” They are trying to express the inexpressible depths of God's love and faithfulness. As Paul wrote:

*<sup>6</sup> For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die —<sup>8</sup> but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:6-8 (ESV)*

And again he writes:

*<sup>38</sup> For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39 (ESV)*

And John writes:

*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 1 John 2:1 (ESV)*

Yes, salvation and forgiveness are gifts of God's grace. We certainly have not earned them. In fact, we have earned just the opposite! And Yes, there is no power in heaven or on earth that can snatch us out of the hand of the Almighty. And Yes, we will certainly not lose our salvation if we stumble and are less than perfect.

### Covenants Are Conditional

The problem is that the word “unconditional” is not found anywhere in the Bible. Why? Because everything in the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation is conditional. As we read in the last chapter,

*Now therefore, **if** you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples... Exodus 19:5 (ESV)*

That is not a popular message because our culture is screaming “***This is MY life, I will do as I please and if you don’t like it you can \_\_\_\_***” The “everyone gets a trophy” generation has become a nation of narcissists that truly believe that they are all the center of the universe and that they deserve whatever they want. The Church now caters to this attitude with messages of, “God has a wonderful plan for **YOUR** life” and “He will grant you the desires of **YOUR** heart” and “God Wants **YOU** to be Rich!” We have reduced the Almighty Creator of the Universe to a genie that we command to get what we want. When we don’t need anything, He needs to stay in His lamp out of our way.



But God is not interested in being the God of millions of two-year olds constantly throwing tantrums to get their way. He is seeking a “kingdom of priests” that will reign with Him. [Revelation 5:9-10] Therefore, He comes to us to make covenant.

### One Nation Under God

The nation of Israel was uniquely, “One Nation Under God.” By the chain of covenants that God made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and then with the people at Mount Sinai and later just before they entered the promised land, He promised them success in everything.

*...the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you... Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle... Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. “The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you... The LORD will command the blessing on you... in all that you undertake... Deuteronomy 28:1-9 (ESV)*

Wow! Who wouldn’t sign up for that! I have been in churches that preach that these blessings even work for unbelievers. *(if the unbeliever donates to them!)* The trouble is that something very important got left out by all those little ...’s. Let’s read that passage again – a little more carefully.

***<sup>1</sup> “And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. <sup>2</sup> And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God. <sup>3</sup> Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. <sup>4</sup> Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. <sup>5</sup> Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. <sup>6</sup> Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. <sup>7</sup> The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. <sup>8</sup> The LORD will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you undertake. And He will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. <sup>9</sup> The LORD will establish you as a people holy to Himself, as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. Deuteronomy 28:1-9 (ESV)***

That's a bit different isn't it. The promises of blessing that God made to Israel were conditional on them obeying the terms of the covenant. Well... hold on... there is more...

<sup>15</sup> ***“But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all His commandments and His statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. <sup>16</sup> Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. <sup>17</sup> Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. <sup>18</sup> Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. <sup>19</sup> Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. <sup>20</sup> “The LORD will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me... Deuteronomy 28:15-20 (ESV)***

And there is still more... *a lot more*. The curses associated with violating the covenant are so severe that they are hard to even read. But just from these you get the picture. The promises of a covenant are conditional. If you obey the terms of the covenant you will be greatly blessed. If you reject the terms of the covenant, you don't merely miss out on the blessings... you bring curses on yourself. This is why I cringe when I hear preachers telling their congregations to ***“Claim the Promises of the Covenant”*** while, at the same time, teaching them to reject the terms of the covenant.

### **Forget it... I'm Out of Here!**

You may be thinking, ***“Wait a minute, God doesn't curse people. He only blesses them! That's just Old Testament stuff! We live in the blessings of the New Testament! If what you are saying is true, the whole Church is cursed!”*** Well, before you throw this book aside, please consider these words of Jesus.

<sup>13</sup> *“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. <sup>14</sup> For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few... <sup>21</sup> Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ Matthew 7:13-23 (ESV)*

What is “lawlessness”? It is refusing to keep the Law of God... It is keeping the covenant. In the same passage, Jesus said,

<sup>17</sup> *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:17-19 (ESV)*

Since Jesus made such strong statements, this must be a very serious matter that we need to look into carefully. The frustrating thing is that we can't go by what the majority of people are doing because Jesus said that most people are on the wrong road. We have always said the people on the "broad road that leads to destruction" were "those in the world." However, just a few verses down, these people are saying that they "did many mighty works in Your Name." Still, before we start pronouncing curses – especially against God's church – let's go back and have another look at the original covenant with Abram.

### Back to Covenants

*<sup>1</sup> Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup> And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." <sup>4</sup> So Abram went, as the LORD had told him...* Genesis 12:1-4 (ESV)

What was God's part of the covenant? "***I will bless you***" and "***in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.***" So it really is true that God's purposes – ***ARE*** – always to bless. So what about all the cursing stuff? Well, what we call "curses" really come in two forms.

The first kind of "curse" is actually "discipline." Sometimes I get stupid and screw up. Please don't call it a "mistake" or a "poor choice" – it is a sin. More importantly, it is MY sin. I knew better and no one forced me to do it. The good news is that, since I am in covenant with God, He disciplines me when I sin.

*<sup>6</sup> For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives. "*  
*<sup>7</sup> ...God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?*  
*<sup>8</sup> If you are left without discipline... then you are illegitimate children and not sons.*  
Hebrews 12:6-8 (ESV)

My heart's desire is to be pleasing to Him in everything that I do and I don't want anything interfering with our relationship. Therefore, I repent quickly and ask for forgiveness so we can move on. However, if I am stubborn, He will escalate the correction as much as needed to break my stubbornness. If you feel that is awful and that God should let me do whatever I want to, you have missed a very important point. God and I are in covenant... a relationship based on love and respect... and He is doing what is necessary to protect that relationship.

Yet, if I harden my heart and reject His correction, I face the second type of curse. That is, not being "His." Everyone is familiar with John 3:16 but few read the verses following it.

*<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but **whoever does not believe is condemned already**, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.* John 3:16-18 (ESV)

Sometimes our world looks pretty good. We have magnificent architecture, beautiful music, powerful machines and unbelievable technology. Yet the day to day experience that people endure is broken relationships, physical and emotional abuse, the destruction that drugs and alcohol cause, theft and betrayal, hopelessness, terrorism and the casual murder of millions of unborn children for the sake of convenience. These are the realities of being “Not My People.” In stark contrast, God calls us to walk in a covenant of blessing with Him.

### Growing in Our Understanding

Another thing to remember is that we don’t just suddenly know everything and walk it out perfectly. When I first accepted Christ, I knew nothing except that I was a sinner in need of a Savior and that somehow, He would be the Lord of my life. I knew absolutely nothing about Torah, and yet I was as saved then as I am today. As I grew in the faith and in my love for God, I believed that Christ had done away with the Law... and yet... I was still saved. Peter says,

*... Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”* 1 Peter 5:5 (ESV)

I need lots of grace so I can not indulge in pride and arrogance. If Jesus is the Lord of your life you are my brother or sister no matter how we might disagree on some things.

### Consequences

I also understand the cost that may be associated with following God’s Laws when the rest of the world is not. First of all, it will impact your relationships. I was very fortunate that, unknown to me, the Holy Spirit was also drawing my wife to follow Torah at the same time He was drawing me. Your decision to follow God’s commands may also mean that you have to find another job. It is not convenient for my boss that I don’t work on the Sabbath. However, since I strive to be the best employee possible the other six days in the week, he allows me that freedom... and I am very thankful for it! If you are a shop owner, keeping the Sabbath might mean being closed on what you think is your most profitable day of the week. Probably the toughest scenario is if you are the pastor of a denominational church. Choosing to follow the scriptures rather than your denomination’s doctrines will almost certainly have severe consequences.

I understand, and we will deal with these issues in the chapter that discusses the Sabbath. But, for the moment, remember that these consequences are actually very similar to the consequences you may have faced when you chose to follow Christ! Also, though it may not look like it at first, God will turn these consequences into blessings.

### Moving Forward

So if we are grafted into the people of Israel and all the verses that say, *“Say to the people of Israel...”* are actually speaking to us... what does that mean. Well, if you are already a true follower of Christ, that is, one that recognizes Him as the Lord of your life, your next step will be a very natural one. Just as you have said, ***“Yes, Lord, I will follow You,”*** in every other area of your life, you simply say, ***“OK, if that is what You want, please teach me Your ways and lead me where You want me to go.”***

When I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior, I knew absolutely nothing, but I made that simple declaration. Similarly, when I realized that the whole Word of God applied to my life, I made the same declaration. Again, it seemed as if I knew nothing but I knew He would be faithful to lead me where He wanted me to go... and He has been!

### Following Christ into Torah

Learning to walk in the covenant, following Torah, is not as simple as it sounds. When my wife and I decided to follow Torah, my goal was simple... if scripture says it... I will live it. It sounds simple, but our world is so different than the world of the Bible, it can be difficult to figure out what “living Torah” looks like in our lives today. You will also find a lot of well-meaning but sometimes misguided advice. That is why I said, “**Following Christ into Torah.**” We must follow Him and – to be able to follow Him – we must concentrate on knowing His voice.

*<sup>27</sup> My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. <sup>30</sup> I and the Father are one.”* John 10:27-30 (ESV)

However, the advice, exhortation and teaching of others is of great value. I am constantly searching for echoes of my Master’s voice in other people. If you wish, you may email me at [Foundations@HisWordInWood.com](mailto:Foundations@HisWordInWood.com) and I will share a list of resources that I have found to be helpful and perhaps a few to be avoided. Of course, like everything in life, none of these resources are perfect so we must rely on the voice of the Holy Spirit revealing Torah to us.

In later chapters, we will wrestle with a few areas that always seem to be confusing. However, for now, I want to prepare you for one that you are certain to be hit by very soon. So brace yourself, here it is...

### If You Follow the Law You Are Under a Curse!

When you decided to follow Jesus, you probably didn’t get very far before someone told you how stupid that was. Well, sadly, it won’t be very long before someone in the Church angrily informs you that if you follow the Law, you are under a curse! They may even tell you that you will lose your salvation. First of all, give them a lot of grace because they mean well, but also be settled in your own mind and heart so that you can give them a good answer that will be helpful to them. After all, our goal in the body of Christ is to build one another up! [1 Thessalonians 5:11]

Of course, the idea that God will curse us for obeying His commands in scripture is a bit absurd. Nevertheless, let’s look at the scriptures they will be pointing to so we can clear the confusion.

*<sup>1</sup> O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? ... Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? <sup>3</sup> Are you so foolish? ... <sup>10</sup> For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.” <sup>11</sup> Now it is evident that no one is justified before*

*God by the law, for “The righteous shall live by faith.”<sup>12</sup> But the law is not of faith, rather “The one who does them shall live by them.”<sup>13</sup> Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us...<sup>23</sup> Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.<sup>24</sup> So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.<sup>25</sup> But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian...* Galatians 3:1-25 (ESV)

That is a lot of red and that is about how you might receive it but what Paul is writing really isn't that difficult to understand. Most of the confusion is because people don't understand the problems that Paul was dealing with and they don't understand the Law that he is referencing. The first thing to recognize is that verse 10 is true. The Law is not a buffet that we can choose a little of this, a bit of that and skip the parts we don't like. Like the rest of scripture, it is all God's word and we must accept all of it. The problem is a key word that most people miss.

*<sup>10</sup> For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, “Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.”*

I do not “rely on” the Law for salvation. I rely solely on the sacrificial death of Christ which paid for all my sins. Therefore, I am not under a curse!

When I accepted Christ as my Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit came into my life and started the long process of conforming me to the image of Christ. [1 John 3:2-3, Romans 8:29] Though I knew nothing about Torah, He was writing it on my heart. As He wrote it on my heart, it started to be lived out in my life. As another person has said, *“Faith is the Root, Keeping the Law is the Fruit.”* The only parts of the God's Law that I didn't learn were the parts that well-meaning but misguided people taught me to ignore. Remember that warning from Jesus,

*Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven...* Matthew 5:19 (ESV)

We must take the responsibility of teaching very seriously because when we teach, we will be held accountable not only for what we believe but also for the impact we have had on others!

*<sup>1</sup> Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. <sup>2</sup> For we all stumble in many ways...* James 3:1-2 (ESV)

What my early teachers taught me, led me away from obeying God in several areas of my life for over 40 years. Thank God for His grace because we really do “stumble in many ways!”

### Is The Law A Curse?

People frequently quote, *“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law...”* This sounds like the Law was a curse that we had to be saved from. But what is the “curse of the Law?” Ezekiel says it simply, *“the soul who sins shall die.”* Ezekiel 18:4 (ESV) It is not the Law that curses us. We curse ourselves when we ignore God's ways that He has shown us in His Law. And that is why I am very thankful that, after all these years, the Holy Spirit has shown me the fullness of His Word that I can walk in fuller obedience to His Word and be set free from these curses.

Just like every church, the church in Galatia was harassed by spiritual bullies. One group, the “Judaizers,” said that you cannot be saved unless you keep the entire Law *including* the “Traditions of the Elders” that Jesus condemned. [Mark 7:6-13] Other groups like the Gnostics had all kinds of rules to make you super-spiritual [Colossians 2:16-23] Both of these groups introduced yet another level of curse because God strictly forbids anyone from adding to or subtracting from His Law.

*You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.* Deuteronomy 4:2 (ESV)

The warnings are just as severe in the New Testament. Consider Jesus’ words in Revelations.

*<sup>18</sup> I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, <sup>19</sup> and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.* Revelation 22:18-19 (ESV)

We will come back to some of these issues in later chapters, but in Galatians 3, Paul was simply drawing people back to the truth that the **ONLY** way of salvation is through Jesus.

### The Law is Not of Faith?

By now you can see that the angry red letters really don’t mean what people commonly interpret them to mean. In closing, I would like to look with you at Paul’s statement, “*The righteous shall live by faith. But the law is not of faith...*” Being part of God’s Israel, has always been by faith. The apostle Paul grieved over his fellow countrymen’s lack of faith and devotes three whole chapters to this in Romans 9 through 11.

*<sup>4</sup> They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises... <sup>6</sup> But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, <sup>7</sup> and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring... <sup>30</sup> What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; <sup>31</sup> but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. <sup>32</sup> Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works...* Romans 9 (ESV)

We also see, in Jesus’ clashes with the corrupt religious leaders of His day, that not everyone who was genetically Jewish were true children of Abraham. He said that the true children of Abraham were those who did the works of Abraham but the spiritual father of these corrupt leaders was the devil because they had no love for God’s word and they had murder in their hearts. [John 8:39-47 / Mark 7:6-13]

The book of Hebrews makes a very interesting statement. Consider this:

*For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.* Hebrews 4:2 (NIV)

This says that when Israel received the Law of Moses, they did not combine it with faith. Indeed, only two men of those who were there that day at Mount Sinai – Joshua and Caleb – walked in faith and entered the Promised Land. I pray that when the Father looks down on me, He will be able to say the same thing about me as He did about Caleb!

*<sup>22</sup> None of the men who have seen My glory and My signs that I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and yet have put Me to the test these ten times and have not obeyed My voice, <sup>23</sup> shall see the land that I swore to give to their fathers. And none of those who despised Me shall see it. <sup>24</sup> But My servant Caleb (Rick), because he has a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land into which he went, and his descendants shall possess it.*  
*Numbers 14:22-24 (ESV)*

So being a true Israelite has always been a matter of faith... just like being a follower of Christ. It isn't a matter of genealogies. God has many children but He doesn't have any grandchildren. Sadly, just because I follow Him, does not mean that my children will. I can only pray that I can live a life so unmistakably devoted to Him that it will be easy for them to follow. Neither is being a true Israelite a matter of following a set of rules. I can even keep 612 of the 613 laws of the Torah perfectly and still be lost. There is, however, one law in a passage known as "*the Shemah,*" that separates the sheep from the goats!

*“Hear, O Israel:  
The LORD our God,  
the LORD is one.  
You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart  
and with all your soul  
and with all your might.  
And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.  
You shall teach them diligently to your children,  
and shall talk of them when you sit in your house,  
and when you walk by the way,  
and when you lie down,  
and when you rise.  
You shall bind them as a sign on your hand,  
and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.  
You shall write them on the doorposts of your house  
and on your gates.*

*Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (ESV)*

This passage is truly the crown jewel of the Old Testament. Devout Jews proclaim it over their lives every day. It is the first prayer their children learn to pray and the last words they whisper as their lives slip away.

## Wait... Back Up...What Did That Verse in Hebrews Say?

Yes, I purposely skipped right over something extremely important in that passage from Hebrews. Let's look at it again.

*For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Hebrews 4:2 (NIV)*

This says that when Israel received the Law of Moses at Mount Sinai they were receiving “the gospel” or “good news” just as we have! That is a totally amazing statement because it says that the Law, or actually the covenant behind the Law, is the **same gospel** as we have received. How can that be?! Well, remember that passage from Jeremiah 31 about the restoration of “Not My People?” Just a few verses down from there Jeremiah makes an incredible statement.

<sup>31</sup> *“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.*

<sup>33</sup> *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”* Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV)

I saved this passage for last because you have to understand a lot before you can comprehend how incredible it is. We frequently hear that the “New Covenant” has done away with the “Old Covenant” and indeed, the book of Hebrews says:

*In speaking of a new covenant, He makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.* Hebrews 8:13 (ESV)

Those who don't understand the Old Testament well, could easily think that the “Old Covenant” is the same as “the Law” and therefore the New Covenant makes the Law obsolete. And back in verse 6, it says that the New Covenant is based on “better promises” than the old. As I heard one pastor shout, **“AWAY with the Old! We have the NEW!”** That really “preached well” but the “Old Covenant” and “The Law” are not the same thing.

When God made covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai (the “Old Covenant”) it was written on two tablets of stone. Everyone knew the Law but it was something written on stone tablets “over there.” What is “New” about the “New Covenant” in Jeremiah 31? God says, **“I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.”** Yes, it is the same Law but now it is written on our hearts! It isn't written on tablets of stone anymore, it is written right on my heart.

The last part of that passage, *“And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD”* is still coming. However, now that **YOU** have heard this, we are one heart closer to it being fulfilled!

Shalom!