

The Law and the New Covenant

(Only One law in the New Covenant)

BACKGROUND

Paul stood for liberty in the Gospel of the Kingdom and stood against the legalists who wanted to bring his converts back under the Law of Moses. He knew that a little legalism would infect the churches of his time, just like yeast spreads through all the dough. He wrote to the Galatians:

Galatians 5:7-11 (NKJV) - *You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion does not come from Him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind; but he who troubles you shall bear his judgment, whoever he is. And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased.*

Notice what he wrote in this quote:

1. He does not preach Judaism and the Law – “*if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution?*”
2. Going back into legalism (the Law) is not following the truth of the Gospel of the Kingdom – “*Who hindered you from obeying the truth?*”
3. The person who brings legalism (the Law) into the church will face judgement – “*he who troubles you shall bear his judgment*”

This reference alone is pretty clear that the Mosaic Law is OUT.

And, remember, the term Law used in the epistles refers to the legal law and the ceremonial law – they were inseparable to the Jews and never referred to in a way that they were independent of each other.¹

This change in the NC away from the Law was actually pre-empted by Jesus:

Luke 16:16 (NKJV) – “*The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.*”

LAWLESSNESS?

Does that mean we are lawless, the very thing the NT warned us about²? No!

In the 1st church there were 2 extremes, Judaizers and Antinomians. Judaizers wanted the church to adhere to the Law with its regulations, feasts and religious activity, but the Antinomians were polar opposites, wanting no law³ of any sort. Antinomian Christians believed that grace meant that they could sin as much as they wanted to with impunity. Paul opposed this view and wrote against it in his letter to the Romans⁴.

So, what is our stance to be if we’re no Judaizers or Antinomians? Jonathan Welton explains:

*“The position of Better Covenant Theology is neither of these, and it is not a middle ground, either. It is something else entirely, because the law of Christ does not fit with either of these ideas. It is not the old covenant Law, and it is not a rejection of law. It is a completely separate ideal called the law of Christ.”*⁵

1 – See ‘Law’: Vine’s Expository Dictionary (www.menfak.no/bibelprog/vines?word=%AFt0001612)

2 – Matthew 7:23; 13:41; 24:12; 2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 John 3:4; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-9 (Hebrews 1:9)

3 – *Anti* means ‘against’, and *nomian* means ‘law’.

4 – Romans 5:12-6:23 (esp. Romans 6:1-2)

5 – Jonathan Welton (October 6, 2015) “Only One Law in the New Covenant”

(weltonacademy.com/blogs/jonathanwelton/50141697-only-one-law-in-the-new-covenant)

LOVE & LAW

Did Jesus say anything about the Law when he brought the Kingdom with him? Yes, he did.

Matthew 22:36-40 (NKJV) – “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’⁶ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’⁷ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Matthew 7:12 (NKJV) – Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

OK, so love is to be the focus or guideline for us.

Jesus even gave us a new commandment about love:

John 13:34 (NKJV) – A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

Did the apostles continue in this vein? John continued with the ‘new commandment’ Jesus gave them:

2 John 5 (NKJV) – And now I plead with you...not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we **love one another.**

So did Paul, declaring also that love fulfils the Law:

Galatians 5:22-26 (NKJV) – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Galatians 5:13-14 (NKJV) – For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”⁸

Romans 13:8 (NKJV) – Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Romans 13:10 (NKJV) – Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Notice that there is no reference to Torah, the Law or Tanakh in these verses about fulfilling the Law.

How can love be the fulfilment of the Law? Simple. **God is love, so if we operate in his character, we are being like him, so we can’t be acting unrighteously. If we’re acting righteously, no law can convict us.**

THE LAW OF LIBERTY

‘Love fulfils the Law’ is referred to as the Law of Christ⁹ as it has relationship to the new commandment Jesus gave his disciples for his future followers. James refers to this law as the ‘Royal Law’.

James 2:8-9 (NKJV) – If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,”¹⁰ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

6 – Deuteronomy 6:5

7 – Leviticus 19:18

8 – Leviticus 19:18

9 – Galatians 6:2

10 – Leviticus 19:18

James also refers to it as the ‘Law of Liberty’:

James 2:12 (NKJV) – *So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.*

James 2:12 (AMPC) – *So speak and so act as [people should] who are to be judged under the law of liberty [the moral instruction given by Christ, especially about love].*

James 1:25 (NKJV) – *But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.*

‘Law of Liberty’ is a strange turn of phrase if we’re supposed to be following the Torah (Mosaic Law). No, not strange at all. This is the law that embodies the NC and it gives us freedom (liberty) from legalism which so binds us up and restricts our operation as sons of the Most High God.

This is why Paul didn’t focus in his letters on the Jewish Laws that he was required to follow as a Jew and why he had liberty to make choices in his life because there was no Law binding him to legalistic rules under the NC.

This is also why: Jesus could go into the homes of sinners; why Peter could break the Law and go into the home of a gentile named Cornelius¹¹; why Paul could preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to the gentiles and fraternize with them; and why Paul taught those who depart from the faith would forbid certain foods which should be eaten freely with thanksgiving.¹² All these were taboo under the Law.

This will also give you understanding why Jesus didn’t agree with the religious leaders in condemning an adulterous woman to stoning, but released her to begin a life without sin.¹³ Very libertine in action, but it wasn’t. It was NC-style administration of a situation, before the NC was instituted.

KEEPING THE LAW IS ERROR

So, the Law of Love is the law we follow, not the Torah or any ceremonial components of it. But what about those who want to follow the Law – the modern Judaizers. Here’s a few references to point out their error:

Romans 8:4 (NKJV) – *that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.*

Ephesians 2:15 (NKJV) – *having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,*

Romans 10:4 (NKJV) – *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

Galatians 2:21 (NKJV) – *I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”*

If we are born-again into Father’s Kingdom and we are Spirit-led, there is no law that locks us in except the Law of Love. If we sin in this state, Christ’s blood covers it¹⁴ – if we repent and seek forgiveness.

THE LAW WRITTEN ON OUR HEARTS

The New Covenant which we are covenantees of was prophesied well before Jesus inaugurated it with his

11 – Acts 10:1-48

12 – 1 Timothy 4:1-5

13 – John 8:1-11

14 – 1 John 1:7

blood sacrifice:

Jeremiah 31:33 (NKJV) – *But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*

Paul wrote that we are partakers of this covenant,¹⁵ this New Covenant (NC) between Father and his Israelite people. We already know this, so the focus in this teaching is on what happens with the Law under the NC. Paul agrees that it's written on our hearts and minds, not on stone or parchment.

But here's the issue: If the Law of Christ is written on our hearts and minds, why are there so many Christians who are involved in evil practices and whose consciences are cauterized¹⁶ so they can't see the sinfulness in their behaviour? Paul even had to warn them because of their oblivion to their waywardness:

1 Corinthians 6:7-11 (NKJV) – *Now therefore, it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? No, you yourselves do wrong and cheat, and you do these things to your brethren! Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals¹⁷, nor sodomites¹⁸, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*

Galatians 5:19-21 (NKJV) – *Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Antinomians really like the concept of the law not being written down because it allows them as libertines to determine their own behaviour, justifying it with scripture. This is a tragedy of our freedom and liberty.

So, if the law of God is written in our hearts and minds, why so much aberrant behaviour among believers. The answer escapes most of us, but it's quite simple: it's there, but it only manifests if our attitudes and our relationship with our King are in the right order. Andrew Murray explains:

“When the law is written in the heart; when the heart is circumcised to love the Lord with all our heart, and to obey Him; when the love of God is shed abroad in the heart; it means that the love of God's law and of Himself has now become the moving power of our life. This love is no vague sentiment, in man's imagination of something that exists in heaven, but a living, mighty power of God in the heart, working effectually according to His working, which worketh in us mightily. A life of obedience is possible.”¹⁹

This is why an intimate love relationship with Jesus, where he becomes our Beloved, is so critical. Our whole spiritual and natural lives hinge on this relationship, as does our eternity.

WHAT IS OUR FRAME OF REFERENCE?

If there's so much sin in Christianity, so that a post-modern Christian is hard to tell from an unsaved person, how can the Law of Love point us in the right direction? This is compounded by the endless descriptions of love which Christians adhere to which inevitably lead them astray because it's not *apage*

15 – See Paul's reference to it as our covenant in Hebrews 8:10 & 10:16

16 – 1 Timothy 4:2

17 – That is, 'catamites'. Those submitting to homosexuals.

18 – Male homosexuals

19 – Andrew Murray “The Two Covenants” p:42

love – God’s kind of love. For example: They approve of gay love and therefore approve of lesbianism and homosexuality.

The epistles have the answer to this question, and Paul puts it clearly many times²⁰. For example:

1 Timothy 1:9-11 (NKJV) - *knowing this: that the law is **not made for a righteous person**, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is **any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine**, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.*

Sound doctrine was the purpose of the NT epistles. The communiques were designed to set the record straight for the Old World churches as to how believers were to think and behave. Sound doctrine is to be taught and modelled so that new believers know how to live. This is why Paul taught for so many hours a day for months and years on end²¹ – he needed to impart everything that he’d been shown by the Spirit so that there were no questions or loop-holes.

IMPORTANT: If you want to keep any part of the Law, you’re under a curse to keep all the Law.²²

To wrap it all up, there is no epistle which has the primary purpose to point believers to the Law, or even to laud the Law as a focus of a believer’s life. **I defy you to show me one.** If that’s so, why are we so determined to go back into the Law – e.g. Seventh Day Adventist teaching, Messianic-style fellowships, Christians keeping the feasts, etc.

FREEDOM!

Laurence

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ESSENTIAL READING

- Johathan Welton (October 6, 2015) “Only One Law in the New Covenant”
(weltonacademy.com/blogs/jonathanwelton/50141697-only-one-law-in-the-new-covenant)

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20 – 1 Timothy 1:10; 4:6, 13, 16; 5:17; Titus 1:9; 2:1; Romans 6:17; (Romans 16:17; 2 Timothy 4:3)

21 – Acts 20:31

22 – Galatians 3:10