

# Under the Law

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Scripture is from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

Galatians 5:18 "But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law."

Those who belong to Christ Jesus are *not* "under the Law."

What does this mean? How is the practice of our faith effected? Does it mean that believers are not obligated to keep the Ten Commandments of Mount Sinai? Does it mean that believers are not obligated to keep any of the commands written down by Moses and preserved for us? What about foods designated "unclean" (See *Leviticus Chapter 11.*) What of the Ten Commandments? Peter said that Paul wrote some "things hard to understand" (2Pet. 3:16). Let's see if we can make sense of "the Law" in a New Covenant context.

## UNDER THE LAW

Which law am I no longer under?

### **Natural law**

*Gravity was working the last time I checked.*

### **The "law of the Lord God of Israel" (2Kings 10:31)**

### **The "Law of Moses"**

*Also called "the Torah," the Law of Moses includes the first five books of the Bible (Joshua 8:31-32, Mal 4:4, 1Cor 9:9, Acts 13:39).*

### **The Ten Commandments - written on stones**

*Also called "The Covenant" and the "first covenant" (Exodus 34:28, Hebrews 9:1)*

**The “law of sacrifices and offerings”** (Leviticus 7:37)

- was a portion of the Law of Moses.

See our study: “[The End of Sacrifices.](#)”

**The “law of commandments contained in ordinances”** (Ephesians 2:15)

These were commands having to do with the separation of Israelites from un-circumcised others. They were specifically “abolished in His flesh,” allowing believing Gentiles to worship with believing Jews (Eph 2:11-13). See our study: “[What Law was Abolished?](#)”

One of these laws was the requirement for circumcision, in order to become part of the “chosen people,” and to enter the Temple of Yehovah.

See our study: “[Circumcision - Under the New Covenant.](#)”

**The law of your mother and father** (Proverbs 6:20).

**The law of a husband over a wife** (Romans 7:2)

- was used by Paul to illustrate the New Covenant as a “New” Covenant of Marriage with Israel.

See our study: “[TWO COVENANTS.](#)”

**The “law of the Jews”** (Acts 25:8)

- included a lot of rules enforced by Pharisees, who claimed that God had spoken those laws to Moses, but Moses did not then write them down, so they were passed down orally.

The **Oral Torah** was finally codified and written down 200-220AD.  
It is called “**The Mishnah.**”

**The “law of a fleshly commandment”** (Hebrews 7:16)

- referred to the law of physical (fleshly) descent from Aaron to qualify for the priesthood (Exo 29:9, Exo 40:15). See the NIV translation of this verse.

This law was specifically “changed” under the “new covenant” according to Hebrews 7:12, allowing Yeshua Messiah to become High Priest of Israel.

See our study: “[The Change of the Priesthood.](#)”

**The “law of works”** (Romans 3:27)

This was the idea that one could earn salvation credits with God by doing “good works,” as outlined in the Torah. Isaiah shot this idea down decisively, when he wrote that all our “good works” are contaminated with our own selfishness (Isaiah 64:6). Paul agreed.

**The “law of my mind”** (Romans 7:23)

Paul despaired that he could not attain to his lofty goal of keeping “the Law,” because “the law of the flesh” (fleshly lusts and desires) worked against him. He rejoiced that the Spirit of Christ within, is stronger than our old “flesh.”

**The “perfect law of liberty”** (*James 1:25, 2:12*)

“The Law of the spirit of life in Jesus Christ, has set me free from the Law of sin and death.”  
(*Romans 8:2*).

**The “law of Christ”** (*Galatians 6:2*).

*According to Christ, the “greatest commandment,” was to love God supremely. The “second” was to love ones neighbor equally with ones self (Matthew 22:27-29).*

*Jesus said, “I give you a new commandment– to love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another” (John 13:34 NET). This command to love all others, and to love them as Christ loved, went beyond the commands of the Torah, especially as understood by First Century Jews.*

**The “law of faith”** (*Romans 3:27*).

*“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law”*  
(*Romans 3:28*).

*Paul was quick to add: “Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31).*

This was a very short list and review. Let’s go into more detail.

## FREE FROM THE LAW - of SIN AND DEATH

Romans 8:2 “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has **made me free from** the law of sin and death.”

Now you know which “law” we believers are definitely NOT “under” - the law which decreed death for every sinner.

When did mankind come “under” the law that demands death?

Answer: That law began with the tree in the Garden of Eden - the “Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil,” and the Serpent speaking lies. God spoke that law to Adam and Eve. The “law of sin and death” said, “**If you sin, you will die.**” Adam, his wife and every descendant, must obey God - or die.

Genesis 3:3 “God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’” (NRS)

*NOTE: A more accurate translation of the Hebrew would be “dying you shall die.” They would not die instantly, on the spot. They would begin to die. Eve and Adam rebelled against God, and they died. We sin, and we die.*

Paul says “all have sinned” (Rom 3:23). “There is no one righteous” (Rom 3:10) - therefore all are condemned, and will die both the first death (physical death) and “the second death” (eternal death) unless pardoned and rescued by Jesus Christ.

The “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” says, that God through Christ will impart to you His Spirit, and that Spirit will reverse the dying process. God will heal you and will give you new life from Him. “The gift of God is eternal life” (Romans 6:23).

When we become “partakers of the divine nature” (2Peter 1:4) **we are enabled** to “walk in newness of life.” The “law of Christ” is slowly “written on our hearts.” We are changed - to be like Him. At His glorious return, those who belong to Christ will receive new immortal spiritual bodies (1Corinthians 15:44).

The pardon, and the healing will not come to everyone. They will come to those who believe that God sent His own Son to this earth, to live and die. It will come to those who ask forgiveness of the Father, in the name of His Son. Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father, but through Me” (Jn 14:6). It will come to those who allow the Spirit of Christ to transform their lives.

## SET FREE FROM ONE LAW - BY ANOTHER LAW

Romans 8:2 “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus **has made me free from** the law of sin and death.”

One law brings death. Paul called the Ten Commandments a “ministry of death written on stones” (2Cor 3:7). Why? Because we cannot keep that law - not in our own strength. That law carries us like a strong current, to death. The other law builds up and heals - like an outboard motor that powers upstream. Both are laws of God. Free will choice decides which law will rule in the life. We must choose. **We must give HIM permission to change us.**

## THE LAW OF THE FLESH

Without the indwelling spirit of God, human nature is “carnal.” Paul called it “the flesh.” He said that without the Spirit of God, “the law of the flesh” rules. It is natural - yes. It was designed by our Creator. But it was designed to be united with the Spirit of the Creator.

The carnal mind (the mind controlled by the flesh alone) is like a boat without oars or rudder - just swept along by the current of desires. It is easily overpowered by the dark forces - evil angels under Satan's command. It is then blinded to the good, and used for evil.

Romans 8:7 "The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." (NIV)

Romans 7:22-24 [Paul wrote] "In my inmost self I dearly love God's law, but I see that acting on my body there is a different law which battles against the law in my mind. So I am brought to be a prisoner of that law of sin which lives inside my body." (NJB)

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body doomed to death?

Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (NIV)

*Paul's "law of sin which lives inside my body," is "the law of sin and death. Christ's "law of the Spirit of Life," delivers us FROM that "law of sin." Because it is stronger than the "law of sin." But we must allow it to enter. We must open the door, for Christ.*

## THOSE WHO ARE UNDER THE LAW

Romans 3:19 "Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God." (NAU)

Here Paul is writing about "the Jews" - his "kinsmen according to the flesh." They had the Law, but they had rejected Jesus as Messiah and Savior. According to Paul, they were "under the Law." Were they "under the law of sin and death?" Yes. Because the only way to God and pardon, and eternal life, is through Jesus Christ. Jesus made that quite plain. His teaching was confirmed by His resurrection from the dead.

"Sin" - by definition - "is the transgression of the law" (1John 3:4). The Law defines sin, and The Law says, "You sin - you die." Death is the consequence of sin, because Christ cannot heal and transform those who refuse Him.

Paul says "all have sinned" (Rom 3:23). Everyone - every human being - has sinned. They have all transgressed the law - whether they understood it or not. Sin is sin - whether large or small. To break one commandment, is to break them all - so far as the consequence goes (James 2:10), which means that "all the world" was condemned to death, including the "righteous" Jews, who tried so hard to get it right.

I was a lawbreaker. Am I now condemned to death? No! Why? Because God - through Christ, has pardoned me, and has begun the healing process in me. He has promised me eternal life.

Those who have accepted the pardon, have received “the Spirit of life.” The healing Spirit of God through Christ, reverses the power of death.

## BORN UNDER THE LAW

Galatians 4:4-5 “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.”

Jesus was “born under the law.” Does this mean that He was born under the Law of Sinai? Does it mean that He was born under the law of the Pharisees - the Oral Torah? Does it mean that Jesus was “born under” “the law of sin and death,” as all other men? Answer: Yes.

Jesus the Christ was born into a culture of people who were governed by the Law of Moses. As an Israelite and a citizen of Judea, He was governed by the Covenant of Sinai. He *also* lived under the rule of the Pharisees, though - as an adult, He tried to correct the distortions of that law, especially the laws that forbade healing on the Sabbath.

But Jesus was not simply born into a culture that kept the Law of Sinai. He was **born under** “the law of sin and death” just like every other human being since the sin of Adam. That law says, “you sin - you die.” **If** Yeshua had sinned - He would have died forever, right along with the rest of mankind. He would not have been resurrected by His Father, and we could not receive eternal life through Him.

Some believe that Jesus could not sin. God does not sin, therefore Jesus could not sin because He was God. They say that Christ was only “born under” the Covenant Law of Sinai, and was not born under the universal “law of sin and death.” In that case, how was it that He died?

God the Father treated His own Son as a sinner - and Jesus died. The sins of the world were put on Him. God put His own Son “under the law of sin and death.”

*NOTE: 1. Jesus was a descendant of Adam. The “law” pronouncing death to every sinner, covered Adam and all his descendants. 2. The Covenant Law of Sinai pronounced a “curse” of death upon offenders. Jesus was an Israelite, descended from Jacob and Judah. He was “born under” the Law of Sinai, therefore He lived “under” the threat of death, should He sin.*

Isaiah 53:6 “All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

If Jesus could not sin, then He was not “made like unto His brethren in every respect” (*Hebrews 2:17*). If He could not sin, then He could not be tempted. We know that He *was* tempted.

Hebrews 4:15 “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

When the Son of God incarnated, He “emptied Himself” of all divine powers. He must live as a man, and overcome Satan as a man, to recover dominion of the earth for mankind. See our study: “[Dominion](#).”

Jesus was “born under” the “law of sin and death,” the “Law of Moses,” and was governed (in this world) by “the law of the Pharisees. Let’s look at other passages where Paul speaks of “the Law.”

#### PAUL - on “THE LAW”

**Paul uses the term “law” or “Torah,” in several different ways.** The context determines which law he is writing about in a particular passage. Sometimes the context is not absolutely clear. Because of this, differences have arisen between believers.

1. He uses “the law” to refer to “the Law of sin and death,” which began in Eden.
2. He uses “the law” to refer to the Covenant of Sinai, written by God in stone.
3. He uses “the law” to refer to The Books of Moses - the first five books of the Old Testament. Those books contain many *individual* laws and ordinances and regulations, and Paul addresses some of them individually. “The law of her husband” is one example. And the “laws of inheritance” are another.
4. He uses “the law” to include the entire body of laws that the Jews lived “under,” including both the Written Torah and the Oral Torah.

*The Oral Torah - the law of the Pharisees, was/is believed to have been spoken by Moses but never written down. According to Jewish tradition, that law was passed down orally from generation to generation. The Oral Torah was finally organized and written down between 200-220CE by Rabbi Yehudah ha Nasi. It is called The Mishna. **Jews today hold the Mishna above the written Torah. It was the same in Christ’s day.***

*Jesus often railed against the traditions of the Oral Torah. “You make the law of no effect by your traditions!” (Matthew 15:6, Mark 7:13).*

## ARE ONLY JEWS - UNDER THE LAW?

1 Corinthians 9:20 “And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law;”

Paul regards “the Jews” as “under the Law.” They lived “under” the written Torah, and the Oral Torah. And those who had rejected Yeshua as Messiah and Lamb of God, were also “under the law of sin and death.” Without God’s true Lamb, they were still “under” the Law’s sure penalty of death. They went on with animal blood sacrifices, believing they could receive justification before God through that system. Paul made it very clear. They could not.

Hebrews 10:4 “It is **impossible** for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.” (NIV)

Galatians 2:16 “... know that a person is **not** justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and **not** by the works of the law, because by the works of the law **no one** will be justified.” (NIV) *Could Paul have said it any plainer?*

Galatians 3:10 “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’” (Deut 27:26)

To be “of the works of the law” was to believe that “works of” the Law of Moses (without Jesus Christ) provided the way to eternal life. But it is impossible for a human being to obey the law of God - without the Spirit of Christ in the heart. Those who believed in “the works” had rejected the Christ. They were lost without knowing it. Without the pardon of God through Christ, and without His Spirit in the inner man, the end is eternal death.



## WITHOUT THE LAW

Romans 2:12 “For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law.”

Gentiles who did not know the Law of Sinai would still perish, because they sinned, though they did not know it. The “law of sin and death” covers all mankind - all descendants of Adam. They would not however, be “judged by the law” (of Sinai). They would not be held to that higher standard. James cautioned against the desire to become teachers, because teachers will be held to a higher standard at the judgment (*James 3:1*).

Romans 4:15 “Where there is no law there is no transgression.”

Satan sinned in heaven. That means there was a law in Heaven. God’s law is as old as the creation of Heaven and angels. It is certainly older than Mount Sinai.

Jesus said, “If you were blind you would have no sin” (*John 9:41*). He was speaking to the Pharisees, who obviously *knew* the Law. In Romans 2:12, Paul was writing about the Gentiles who were ignorant of the Torah. God would not judge them for Sabbath breaking (for instance) because they did not understand that He had declared that day holy.

Paul wrote “all have sinned” (*Romans 3:23*). **Sin is sin - whether you “know” it or not**, and there are consequences. But where one is (innocently) ignorant of the law, there would be no penalty for premeditated rebellion against the revealed will of God.

Gentiles - ignorant of the Torah, would die because they sinned. They would die because, without Christ, they could not overcome the carnal (*selfish*) nature. They would die because eternal life is found only through Jesus. They would *not* be punished for rebellion against God.

I believe that every person who lived and died in ignorance of God and His law, will be resurrected at the 8<sup>th</sup> millennium as “the rest of the dead.” They will continue their physical lives. They will be governed by the redeemed from the “first resurrection,” until they can choose whom they will serve. See our studies on the 8<sup>th</sup> millennium, when Messiah will reign on the earth. Go to [The 8<sup>th</sup> Day studies page](#).

## APART FROM THE LAW

Romans 3:21 “But now, quite apart from Torah, God's way of making people righteous in his sight has been made clear- although the Torah and the Prophets give their witness to it as well.” (CJB)

This is one of those “hard to understand” passages from Paul. Why would Paul say that God’s way of righteousness is “apart from” the law? Answer: Because it is different from - apart from, the law of Sinai. It is a different law. It is “the law of the spirit of life,” received only by those who believe in Jesus as Savior, Messiah, King and Son of God. The Law of Sinai could not “take away sins.” It was “impossible for the blood of sacrifices to take away sins” (*Hebrews 10:14*). The blood of goats and rams could not change the heart. That comes by faith.

It is definitely impossible to keep the law perfectly, every moment. And all our “good works” are “like filthy rags” because they are always contaminated with our own selfishness (*Isa. 64:6*). We cannot earn salvation points with God, by any of our “good works.”

*NOTE: Good works are not useless. God has promised blessings for obedience.*

## GOOD WORKS

Romans 6:14-15 “For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace. What then? **Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace?** By no means!”

Remember, to sin is to transgress the law. The law defines what is sin. One cannot say what is sin and what is not, except by hearing the law. Fornication, for instance, means “unlawful sex.” The New Testament certainly admonishes believers to avoid fornication. How would we know what to avoid, if we threw out the law? This must mean **the law is still viable, as a guide to righteous behavior**.

The “**man of sin**” is called “**the man of law-LESS-ness**” (*2Thess 2:3, 7-8*). Those who serve this coming deceiver, will practice lawlessness. That should tell us that “the law” of God is still the standard for moral behavior. Those who stand against the Evil One “keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (*Rev 12:17, Rev 14:12*).

John saw “God’s temple in heaven was opened,” just before the last plagues of Revelation are poured out. “Within His temple was seen the Ark of His covenant” (*Revelation 11:19*). This is because **the Ten Commandments contained in that Ark, will serve as the standard of judgment**.

Under the New Covenant, the Ten Commandments are still the standard. The Law is not set aside. Specific elements of the “first covenant” are “changed” in the New Covenant. The priesthood reverts BACK to the original - “the firstborn,” who offer “spiritual sacrifices.” This is the Melchizedek priesthood. Physical circumcision is no longer required for citizenship in the “commonwealth of Israel.” The “blood of Christ” replaces the “blood of goats and rams.” The moral code remains: Love God supremely. Love others as Christ has loved you.

We are NOT saved by keeping the law - because we CANNOT keep it - not perfectly. We are saved by God through Christ. We are drawn to Him because of Christ's death for us. His spirit then enables obedience to His law. This is the New Covenant promise.

Ezekiel 36:27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."

*When you read the Ten Commandments, read them as a promise of what Christ will do "in you."*

*We pray this study will prove a blessing.  
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