

Old Covenant Living vs. New Covenant Living

Many believers understand the New Covenant theologically, but still live practically under the Old Covenant.

Old Covenant Living

Old Covenant living is a **performance-based way of relating to God**.

Even if someone believes in Jesus, they can still *live* as if their relationship with God depends on what they do.

What it looks like:

- “If I do good, God will bless me”
- “If I mess up, God is disappointed or against me”
- “This bad thing must be happening because I sinned”
- Constantly trying to **earn God’s approval**
- Feeling like you must **fix yourself before coming to God**

Core mindset:

“If I do this... then God will respond”

This leads to:

- Fear and pressure
- Guilt and self-condemnation
- A constant feeling of falling short
- Trying to manage life through control and effort

Even spiritually, it becomes a checklist:

- Pray enough
- Read enough
- Be good enough

But deep down, there’s frustration—because you can never fully measure up.

New Covenant Living

New Covenant living is a **relationship based on receiving what Jesus has already done.**

It shifts everything from **your performance** → **to Christ's finished work.**

What it looks like:

- “I am already reconciled to God”
- “God is not counting my sins against me”
- “My righteousness comes from Jesus, not me”
- Living from **acceptance**, not for acceptance
- Trusting God's faithfulness more than your consistency

Core mindset:

“Jesus has done it... I receive it”

This leads to:

- Freedom instead of pressure
- Peace instead of fear
- Confidence instead of insecurity
- Gratitude instead of striving

The Key Difference

Old Covenant Living

- Focuses on **what God is counting against me**
- Keeps trying to **pay for what Jesus already paid for**
- Lives in a cycle of striving and discouragement

New Covenant Living

- Focuses on **what God is counting toward me (Christ's righteousness)**
- Trusts that **it is finished**
- Lives from identity, not for identity

A Critical Insight

*We often try to reconcile ourselves to God—
when the New Covenant says we are already reconciled.*

This is where many believers get stuck:

- Still trying to earn closeness
- Still trying to “get right” with God
- Still believing God is holding things against them

But the truth is:

Reconciliation is not something we achieve—it’s something we receive.

The Role of the Holy Spirit

Another major shift:

Old Covenant Living

- Relies on **self-effort**
- “Try harder”

New Covenant Living

- Relies on the **Holy Spirit within**
- Transformation comes from **God working in you**

Instead of:

“I need more patience”

It becomes:

“Holy Spirit, produce patience in me”

Final Contrast

Old Covenant Living

- Striving
 - Pressure
 - Fear
 - Self-reliance
 - Condemnation
-

New Covenant Living

- Receiving
 - Freedom
 - Peace
 - God-dependence
 - No condemnation
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Bottom Line

Old Covenant living says:
“I need to do more for God”

New Covenant living says:
“Jesus has done everything—I now live from that reality”

Old Covenant vs. New Covenant

Theme	Old Covenant	New Covenant
Basis	Built on Israel’s covenant obedience under the law	Built on Jesus’ obedience, righteousness, death, and resurrection
Conditional or unconditional?	Conditional: “If you obey...” blessings; “if you do not obey...” curses (see Deuteronomy 28)	Established by Christ and grounded in His finished work, not my performance (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:6)
Mediator	Moses	Jesus, the mediator of a better covenant (Hebrews 8:6; 9:15)
Law	Written on stone tablets	God’s law written on the heart (Jeremiah 31:33)
Human problem	Revealed sin but could not transform the heart	Deals with sin, gives new birth, new heart, and the Holy Spirit
Power of the law	Holy and good, but powerless to save sinful people	Christ does what the law could not do because of human weakness (Romans 8:3–4)
Purpose of the law	Reveals sin, exposes guilt, restrains evil, points us to our need for a Savior	Fulfilled in Christ; believers now live by the Spirit, not under the law as a covenant of righteousness (Galatians 3:24; Romans 3:20)
Blessings / curses	Blessings for obedience, curses for disobedience (Deuteronomy 28)	Christ bore the curse for us (Galatians 3:13); in Him we receive blessing, grace, inheritance, and sonship
Sacrifices	Repeated animal sacrifices that could not fully remove sin	One perfect sacrifice for sins forever—Jesus (Hebrews 10:1–14)
Forgiveness	Sacrificial system covered sin temporarily and pointed forward	Full forgiveness in Christ; sins remembered no more (Jeremiah 31:34; Hebrews 10:17)
Righteousness	Required under the law, but fallen people could not attain it by performance	Righteousness comes from God through faith in Christ (Philippians 3:9; Romans 3:21–22)
Relationship with God	Access was limited, guarded, mediated through priests and sacrifices	Bold access to God through Jesus (Hebrews 4:16; 10:19–22)
Heart condition	External commands could not change the inner man	God gives a new heart and Spirit-enabled obedience (Ezekiel 36:26–27)
Identity of God’s people	Covenant nation marked outwardly, including circumcision in the flesh	Covenant people marked inwardly by the Spirit; circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:28–29)
Result	Condemnation for lawbreakers	No condemnation in Christ (Romans 8:1)

Theme	Old Covenant	New Covenant
Final goal	Revealed God's holiness and man's inability	Brings us into union with Christ, adoption, transformation, and eternal inheritance

Main truths to highlight

1. The Old Covenant was conditional

The Old Covenant included covenant blessings and covenant curses. Deuteronomy makes this very clear. Obedience brought blessing; disobedience brought curse. The covenant exposed both God's holiness and Israel's inability to keep His law perfectly.

Key passages:

- Deuteronomy 28
- Exodus 19:5
- Leviticus 26

2. The New Covenant is not built on my performance, but Jesus'

The New Covenant stands on what **Jesus has done**, not on what I do well enough. He fulfilled the law, bore sin, took the curse, and rose again.

Key passages:

- Luke 22:20
- Hebrews 8:6
- Hebrews 10:14
- Galatians 3:13
- Romans 5:19

Results and benefits of the New Covenant

Under the New Covenant, because of Jesus:

- I am a **new creation** — 2 Corinthians 5:17
- God is **not counting my sins against me** — 2 Corinthians 5:19
- My righteousness comes **from God**, not from me, and is received **by faith** — Philippians 3:9
- Jesus **fulfilled the law for me** — Matthew 5:17; Romans 8:3–4
- I am not yet perfected, but I will be like Him when I see Him — 1 John 3:2–3
- God has begun a work in me and **will complete it** — Philippians 1:6
- I am **adopted** — Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:4–7
- I am **redeemed** — Ephesians 1:7
- I am **forgiven** — Colossians 1:13–14
- I am **holy and blameless in His sight** — Ephesians 1:4
- I have **peace with God** — Romans 5:1
- I have **direct access to God** — Hebrews 10:19–22
- I have received the **Holy Spirit** — Galatians 3:14; Ezekiel 36:27
- I am no longer under condemnation — Romans 8:1
- I am an **heir with Christ** — Romans 8:17
- I have been brought near to God — Ephesians 2:13
- I have an eternal inheritance — Hebrews 9:15
- I am empowered to bear fruit through union with Christ — John 15:4–5

The purpose of the law

The law is holy, righteous, and good—but it is **powerless to save** sinful people. Its purpose includes:

- **Revealing sin** — Romans 3:20
- **Increasing awareness of transgression** — Romans 5:20
- **Showing us our need for mercy** — Galatians 3:10
- **Acting as a guardian/tutor to lead us to Christ** — Galatians 3:24
- **Silencing self-righteousness** and making the whole world accountable before God — Romans 3:19

So the law does not save us. It exposes us and points us to Jesus.

The prophets pointed forward to the New Covenant

The Old Testament prophets did not merely reinforce law-keeping. They also pointed forward to a coming covenant in which God would do something deeper and better.

Jeremiah — the New Covenant

- **Jeremiah 31:31–34**
God promises a **new covenant**, not like the covenant made when He brought Israel out of Egypt. He says He will write His law on their hearts and remember their sins no more.

Ezekiel — a new heart and new spirit

- **Ezekiel 36:25–27**
“I will give you a **new heart**... I will remove from you your **heart of stone** and give you a **heart of flesh**... and I will put my Spirit within you.”

Deuteronomy — circumcision of the heart

- **Deuteronomy 10:16** calls for heart circumcision.
- **Deuteronomy 30:6** promises that **the Lord Himself** will circumcise the heart.

This is important: under the old covenant, people were commanded to do what they could not produce in themselves. In the promise of the new covenant, **God promises to do in us what He commands**.

Jesus as the Second Adam

Theme	First Adam	Jesus, the Second/Last Adam
Role	Representative head of humanity	Representative head of a new humanity
Response to God	Disobeyed in a garden	Obedied the Father perfectly
Result of his act	Sin, condemnation, death entered the world	Righteousness, justification, and life come through Him
Legacy	Fallen race	New creation people
Key passages	Genesis 3	Romans 5:12–21; 1 Corinthians 15:45–49

Adam failed where Christ triumphed.

Through one man came sin and death; through one Man comes righteousness and life.

Jesus and Israel: coming out of Egypt

Matthew explicitly connects Jesus to Israel's story:

- **Matthew 2:15** — “Out of Egypt I called my son,” quoting **Hosea 11:1**

Originally, Hosea referred to **Israel** coming out of Egypt in the exodus. But Matthew shows that Jesus is the true Son who **recapitulates** Israel's story and fulfills it.

Comparison

Theme	Israel	Jesus
Called God's son	Exodus 4:22	Matthew 3:17
Came out of Egypt	National exodus	Matthew 2:15
Passed through water	Red Sea	Baptism
Tested in wilderness	40 years	40 days
Response to testing	Repeated failure, grumbling, rebellion	Perfect obedience and trust
Covenant faithfulness	Broke covenant	Fulfilled covenant

So Jesus does what:

- **Adam failed to do**
- **Israel failed to do**
- **we fail to do**

He is the faithful Son, the true Israel, the obedient Man, and the mediator of the new covenant.

Summary

Old Covenant: reveals God's holiness, exposes human sin, and shows that law-breakers deserve judgment.

New Covenant: gives what the old covenant could never produce—full forgiveness, a new heart, the Holy Spirit, righteousness by faith, and secure standing with God through Jesus Christ.