

“*word of truth*” is an obvious illusion to the promise of the New Covenant foreseen in the Prophets, and which has produced a new life and divinely inspired obedience for believers.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 - 31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah," 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 "And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." NASB

Ezekiel 11:19-20 -19 "And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them." Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. NASB

Ezekiel 36:25-27 - 25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." NASB

Thus when James refers to the Law, he sees the Law as **the fulfilled Law in Christ** which has freed us from sin by regeneration and conversion, a Gospel reality that has now dawned in the age of the New Covenant. Therefore he does not minimize the Law but rather sees it as a guide and a mirror (1:23), clearly informing us of God’s will so that we are freed from the shackles of human sin in order to become **doers** of the **Word** and thus please God, be blessed by Him, and avoid sinning against Him (1:22-25). Thus James refers to the Law as the “*Law of liberty.*”

James 1:25 - 25 But one who looks intently at **the perfect law, the law of liberty**, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but **an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed** in what he does. NASB
Now all of this may seem as though James is exhorting us to obedience to the Law as if we were under the Law. However the discussion in James 2:14-26 clearly focuses on the life of faith, where James makes the point that the kind of faith that “*saves,*” is the true and genuine kind of faith that produces good works.

James 2:14-17 - 14 What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has **faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him?** 15 If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? 17 **Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.** NASB

James emphasis on obedience to the Law and producing good works as a result of faith, is designed to drive home the point that obedience to God is an essential part of born again faith, and mere professors are in fact “*merely hearers who delude themselves*” (1:22). He speaks of a salvation by “*faith*” (2:14) and also a salvation by the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, where he clearly testifies of an “*implanted word*” which “*is able to save your souls.*”

James 1:18 - 18 In the exercise of His will **He brought us forth by the word of truth**, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. NASB

James 1:21 - 21 Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, **in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.** NASB

Therefore, James clearly sees the freedom that has come to us now in the Gospel, the “*faith*” that “*saves*” by an “*implanted word of truth,*” which produces a visible obedience. In this he exhorts us to continued obedience to the moral aspects of the Law. He sees this as the way of freedom from human sin and as freedom to obey by a newly empowered and born again life. We now obey the Law because God is empowering us, and this is the way of true freedom from the human shackles of sin.

In the epistles of **1 and 2 John** there is a reference to the Law by way of the word “*commandments*.” John **never mentions the ceremonial Law, circumcision, the Sabbath or food laws**. Rather, John sees the commandments in terms of **love for God and for neighbor**. In this see that John exhorts obedience to the moral aspects of the Law, and sees the “*commandments*” as having been fulfilled in Christ as the new age of the Gospel has dawned, and the **indwelling Spirit** is a reality that allows us to “*abide in Him*.”

1 John 3:23-24 - 23 And **this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another**, just as He commanded us. 24 And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us. NASB

See here that “*believing in Jesus*” and “*loving one another*,” are identified with each other. Consider how the second table of the **Law is closely tied to the Gospel** or believing in Jesus Christ. This emphasis on **faith and love** is a major theme in 1 and 2 John. Thus see that the “*commandments*” cannot be restricted to Old Testament “*commandments*” but are identified with the Gospel. Therefore, born again Spirit empowered faith that manifests itself in the obedience of love, is John’s theme, showing the heart of Christian life in the new gospel age.

1 John 4:7-8 - 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and **everyone who loves is born of God and knows God**. 8 The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. NASB

1 John 4:13-14 - 13 By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because **He has given us of His Spirit**. 14 And we have beheld and bear witness that **the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world**. NASB

1 John 4:20-21 - 20 If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And **this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother** also. NASB

Much like James, John explains that true saving faith manifests itself in obedient love for God and neighbor. Notice the two tables of the Law shining brightly here. But **the Law here is empowered by the indwelling Spirit** which is identified with the new Gospel age and faith in Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. As John summarizes his letter in chapter 5, he draws these two themes of loving God and neighbor with being “*born of God*.”

1 John 5:1-3 - 1 **Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God**; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when **we love God and observe His commandments**. 3 **For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments**; and His commandments are not burdensome. NASB

Then he clearly explains that being “*born of God*” is a direct result of “*believing that Jesus is the Son of God*,” which he identifies as “*the victory that has overcome the world, our faith*.”

1 John 5:4-5 - 4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and **this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith**. 5 And who is the one who overcomes the world, **but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?** NASB

See then the use of the Law in the **General Epistles** is much like its use in the Gospels and in Acts. The moral Law is seen as God’s eternal guide and mirror for us, but Jesus has brought a new Messianic age of life and immortality to light through the Gospel. The Ceremonial Law is seen as **temporary** and in contrast to the **Person and Work of Christ**, who is the fulfillment thereof, which has brought about a radical new born again age of faith. In this new Spirit empowered age, God has regenerated us and written the Law on our hearts. This has resulted in a faith towards Jesus the Christ. This faith is then expressed practically in loving obedience to God in the moral precepts of the Law, loving God and neighbor. Ceremony and ritual have given way to genuine and heartfelt conformity to God’s holy will, by a radical regeneration of the Holy Spirit. This is the **eternal and effectual** New Covenant age of Messianic salvation.