



[John 8:2-11](#)

(2) Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. (3) Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, (4) they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. (5) Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?" (6) This they said, testing Him, that they might have *something* of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with *His* finger, as though He did not hear. (7) So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." (8) And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. (9) Then those who heard *it*, being convicted by *their* conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. (10) When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" (11) She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

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Condemnation would have meant the death penalty because "the wages of [sin](#) is death." [Jesus](#) provides us an example of *righteous judgment* under the terms of the New Covenant. First, let us consider who He is, so that we can see His authority. He is Immanuel—[God](#) with us." If anybody understood the application and administration of the [law of God](#) for the church under the New Covenant, it was Jesus of Nazareth. In addition, He is not only Immanuel, He is also the Head of the church.

Why does He make this judgment? Under the terms of the New Covenant, the church is *not* a civil entity, meaning that it has no civil authority to carry out the death penalty. But does this mean that the law of God is done away? No. [Romans 6:23](#) still says, "The wages of sin is death." Death for sin is merely *delayed* under the New Covenant. The sin and the death penalty are still there, but the church is in a peculiar position in relation to

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law. The law of God is not administered by the church as it was by Israel when they made the Old Covenant with God. Both covenants have the same laws, but different administrations.

Are [adultery](#) and lust (two sins involved in this episode) still sins under the New Covenant? Absolutely! So is the breaking of the other eight commandments. But the church, out of necessity, has to administer it differently. [Forgiveness](#) of this woman is implied, as Jesus, Immanuel, said that He did not condemn her. Even though it is not stated directly, He forgave her.

But did He say, "Go, and don't be concerned about committing adultery again"? Certainly not! As the Head of the church, He said, "Go, and don't break that law again!" He justified her in relation to this one law, and warned her, "Don't break it." His forgiveness did not do away with the law! It is ridiculous, on its face, to conclude that, when [grace](#) clears us and brings us into alignment with God and His laws, that it eliminates the law! Only when there is a clear statement or example in God's Word that a law has been put aside should we make such a determination.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[The Covenants, Grace, and Law \(Part 4\)](#)



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