

# Covenants 101

---

One of the biggest misconceptions, yet most easily understood subjects in the Bible, is that of covenants. This topic can easily fill up volumes, but in an effort to make it readily digestible yet give it the necessary depth a student of the Bible desires, it will be kept as short as possible.

## Covenant Defined

It is simply: A contract based on law.

*Webster* defines a “covenant” as a “usually formal, binding agreement between two or more persons, to do or not to do something; a document containing the terms of the agreement.”

A covenant is an **agreement** between parties based on law. When one party breaks the agreement, the other party is no longer bound by that agreement, either.

This language is still in use today and is very common to begin a written lease agreement as follows, “We hereby *covenant* and agree...”

## Covenant is Not the Same as the Law

What we need to be clear about then is that once we understand that a covenant is merely a contract or an agreement, is that a covenant is **not the same as the law**.

In fact, the Bible speaks about more than just one or two covenants, it addresses many. When we realize that a covenant is a contract based on the law, it opens the possibility for there easily to be many more. How many times did God say, “**If** you do this, **then** I will do such and such”? This is an agreement based upon conditions. We do this all the time with varying levels of seriousness.

As we go through the Bible, we find that there are quite a few covenants or contracts that are talked about. So it is actually **incorrect** to say that the Bible **only** speaks about the “Old” and the “New” Covenants.

The important concepts to grasp here are:

- A covenant is not the same as the law
- A covenant is based on the law

So when a covenant is broken or done away with, it **does not do away with the law** upon which it is based.

## Example: Homeowner Association

Most homeowner associations (HOAs) use a *Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions* (CCR) to govern the relationship between them and a homeowner. If we wanted to add a barn to our backyard and paint it fluorescent pink, we would not be allowed to do that – not because it is against the law of the state, but due to the fact that we agreed upon moving into the subdivision that we would abide by the CCR. Now, if the HOA was dissolved, it may mean that we can paint our barn whatever color that we want since the CCR is no longer in effect. What it does NOT mean is that we can dismiss the state law governing the building of the barn and all the codes that regulate it. Doing away with the HOA covenants or agreements **does not do away with the law that was there before.**

While this example may be clear, most **believe** that when the “Old Covenant” was broken and subsequently done away with, that it did away with the Ten Commandments and the rest of God's laws – nothing could be further from the truth.

These laws were not brought into existence with any of the covenants, in fact it was just the opposite. They had to be in existence beforehand so that the covenants could be based on them.

Some confuse the fact that when God wrote down the Ten Commandments for the Israelites at Mount Sinai that He was giving it to them for the first time. The truth is that they had been in effect since the creation of man and God was just writing it down for them at that time.

## **Law of God is the Same Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow**

God's laws in His Word have been in effect since the creation of man, are currently in effect and will be throughout the Millennium. More often than not, any scriptures that are used to prove that the law is done away with, actually do the exact opposite. For instance:

Romans 13:10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore, love *is* the fulfillment of the law.

This is where most people will stop and say, “See, all you have to do is love.” But they are only half right. We do have to love, but that requires action – the part that they are leaving out or just plainly not seeing is in verses 8-9.

Romans 13:8 Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. [through love we can completely keep the law as Paul shows in the next verse]

Romans 13:9 For the commandments, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY," "YOU SHALL NOT MURDER," "YOU SHALL NOT STEAL," "YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS," "YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."\*

Paul is showing that we love by keeping the commandments of God, in this case the Ten Commandments. It is also encapsulated in "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." What we must understand is that it by no means reverses, erases, or annuls the rest

of the commandments of God. By applying love to each and every situation we will be doing what God asks us to do.

God is love (1 John 4:8), the law is love (Romans 13:10) and the law defines the nature of God. We see that these two are inextricably linked. The Ten Commandments can be summed up in “love towards God” and “love towards man” (Matthew 22:37-40).

We can now clearly see that the law of God is a description of the nature of God. Since we know that God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow and He does not change (Hebrews 13:8; Malachi 3:6), we can see why His laws and ways are not going to change.

## **Covenants with the Nation of Israel**

Now that we have established what a covenant is (simply an agreement or a contract), it should not surprise you to learn **that there was more than one covenant** with the physical nation of Israel. We find the first one with the nation of Israel in the second book of the Bible.

Exodus 19:1 In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came *to* the Wilderness of Sinai.

Exodus 19:2 For they had departed from Rephidim, had come *to* the Wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness. So Israel camped there before the mountain.

God instructs Moses to make the people an offer of a covenant or an agreement:

Exodus 19:3 And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel:

Exodus 19:4 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.

Exodus 19:5 'Now therefore, **if** you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant (**My agreement or My contract**), **then** you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine.

Exodus 19:6 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

Let's continue: and note the people's response to God's offer:

Exodus 19:7 So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him.

Exodus 19:8 Then all the people answered together and said, "**All that the LORD has spoken we will do.**" So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD.

God and the people agreed on the terms or conditions of the covenant.

God then goes on in chapters 20-23 of Exodus to explain the foundation of this covenant—what the covenant would be based on by speaking the Ten Commandments directly to the people and then by giving Moses additional statutes and judgments to be communicated to the people.

And, as is the case with many contracts today, something else was necessary to make the covenant

binding and “enforceable.” Today, we may need a certification of a written agreement in which a notary places their seal on the document. At the time of Moses, the covenant had to be sealed with blood of animals.

Exodus 24:3 So Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has said we will do." [**This is the second time they agreed to it.**]

Exodus 24:4 And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel.

Exodus 24:5 Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD.

Exodus 24:6 And Moses took half the blood and put *it* in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar.

Exodus 24:7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient." [**This is the third time they agreed to it.**]

Exodus 24:8 And Moses took the blood, sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you **according to all these words.**"[In other words based upon the preceding chapters 20-23, which includes the Ten Commandments as well as the other judgments]

At this point the covenant was confirmed or legally binding, and cannot be changed as Paul notes in:

Galatians 3:15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though *it is* only a man's covenant, yet *if it is* confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it.

If there is a violation of any of the agreed-upon terms and conditions of a binding contract, then there is a: **breach of contract**; a breaking of the contract. A failure to honor a contract normally invokes a penalty. This was the case in the covenant that Israel made with God.

Leviticus 26:14 'But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, Leviticus 26:15 and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, **but break My covenant,**

Leviticus 26:16 I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it.

Leviticus 26:17 I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you.

Leviticus 26:18'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.

Leviticus 26:25 And I will bring a sword against you that will **execute the vengeance of the covenant**; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy.

God was saying here that He would hold them to their word. They had agreed to the conditions of the covenant and said that they would do their part. But they did not – they broke this initial covenant pretty quickly when they made a golden calf and began worshipping it in Exodus 32.

God then made yet another “Old Covenant” with them in (Exodus 34:10) and then a third "Old Covenant” with those that survived the trek through the wilderness just prior to their entering the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 29). This last one included the sacrifices, a system that was introduced later because of their sins.

It is important to keep all the pieces of the puzzle straight so that when go to add more pieces the picture will develop properly and we will not have to force other pieces in where they do not fit.

Let's examine a little more closely the type of covenant or contract the God of the Old Testament had with the physical nation of Israel. Once we understand what exactly they were so much more will become evident!

### **Old Covenant a Type of Marriage Contract**

Jeremiah 31:32 "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, [the part that I want to bring to your attention] My covenant which they broke, though **I was a husband to them**, says the LORD.

The Old Covenant was a type of Marriage contract between the God of the Old Testament and the physical nation of Israel!

So when we view the covenant this way, the result of the breach of this contract, the consequence of it was DIVORCE.

Jeremiah 3:8 Then I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery [spiritually against God], I had put her away and given her a **certificate of divorce**; yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but went and played the harlot also. Jeremiah 3:9 So it came to pass, through her casual harlotry, that she defiled the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. [they did this through the making of idols and putting other gods before Him]

Because the Israelites did this time after time – committed spiritual adultery – the Old Covenant which was a marriage covenant, became null and void and was no longer binding.

Now, it should become apparent why the Old Covenant relationship is obsolete. Christ, the God of the Old Testament, divorced physical Israel and is no longer in a relationship with them.

Hebrews 8:13 In that He says, "A new *covenant*," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

## Sacrificial System Replaced

Among other components of the covenants, the sacrifices that were a part of the third covenant with Israel in Deuteronomy 29 were made obsolete by the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrificial system did vanish with the destruction of the temple soon after this was written.

The writer of Hebrews is not saying here that the law of God was growing old and ready to vanish away—in fact we see further proof of this in the preceding verse:

Hebrews 8:12 "For I will be merciful to their **unrighteousness**, and their **sins** and their **lawless** deeds I will remember no more."

To have **unrighteousness** and **lawlessness** there needs to be a law to define what is righteous and lawful (1 John 3:4; Romans 3:31; 4:15). The difference at this point in the plan of God is that the sins can be forgiven because of the sacrifice of Christ's life.

He goes on to show that the sacrifices were no longer required, but that the ones that were still performed by the Jews at that time would soon fade away. He was explaining that the whole sacrificial system had already become obsolete and was no longer necessary as a means of atoning for sins and making their covenant relationship right.

This means, the Old Testament covenants with the nations of Israel and Judah are no longer valid since they have been broken – not only the first one, but all the subsequent ones with the nation of Israel.

Why was a new covenant necessary? We are beginning to see the answer to that.

## What was the problem with the Old Covenant?

Hebrews 8:7 For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

Hebrews 8:8 Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;

It was the people who broke the covenants—the fault was with the people—not with the rest of the Old Testament covenants in any way. God is perfect and so are His ways. The agreement that they had come to was without fault. It was Israelites continual breaking of the agreement that was the problem.

The Israelites were unable to keep the terms of this Marriage Contract! As we previously saw in Jeremiah 3:8-9, Israel committed spiritual adultery by being idolatrous and repeatedly putting other gods or husbands before the true God. The Israelites broke the marriage covenant – because of this the God of the Old Testament, who later became Jesus Christ, divorced them.

## The NEW Covenant – a Marriage Covenant

Now it should come as no surprise – the New Covenant is also a Marriage Agreement.

In Hosea 2:16, 18–20, let's notice some interesting additional information.

Hosea 2:16 "And it shall be, in that day," [at the time of His return] Says the LORD, "*That* you will call Me 'My Husband,' And no longer call Me 'My Master,'

Hosea 2:18 In that day **I will make a covenant for them** With the beasts of the field, With the birds of the air, And *with* the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, To make them lie down safely.

Hosea 2:19 "I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy;

Hosea 2:20 I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the LORD.

Here we have the concept that *we* WILL call Christ the Husband (in other words there will be a marriage between Him and His people) at the time of His second coming. We are also introduced to the concept of betrothal [which we will address later].

Jesus Christ is the administrator or minister of this New Covenant:

Hebrews 8:6 But now He [Christ] has obtained a more excellent **ministry**, inasmuch as He is also **Mediator** of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

One of the express purposes of Christ's coming was to confirm this covenant – that is He came **to establish and give it credence**. Jesus Christ came to confirm the covenant for one "week":

Daniel 9:26 "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it *shall be* with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.

Daniel 9:27 Then **he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week**; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."

When we apply the 'day' for a year principle of prophecy (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:3-6) to what has become known as the 70 weeks prophecy, we see that the new covenant will be established for seven years – but this time will be cut in half initially ("middle of the week").

Christ ministered here on earth for 3 ½ years. He confirmed or spelled out the terms of the new covenant to His disciples who in turn recorded them for us today. His ministry was to cut in half and after 3 ½ years Christ was crucified. BUT He will complete His work of confirming the New Covenant in the future:

Hebrews 8:10 "For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel **after those days [after the Great Tribulation and Day of the Lord]**, says the LORD:

### **The New Covenant -- Sealed with Blood**

As we have already seen, the previous covenant had been sealed with the blood of animals (Exodus 24:7-8). Blood was necessary for the binding of the new covenant as well. Except this time it would not be an animal, but rather the Son of God. Notice what Jesus Christ said right before he presented himself as this sacrifice:

Luke 22:19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, saying, "**This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.**"

Luke 22:20 Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "**This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.**"

The written agreement had to be sealed with blood, this made it binding and thereby ratified the covenant. This was done for all mankind:

Matthew 26:27-28 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, "**Drink from it, all of you.**"

Matthew 26:28 "**For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.**"

By dying for our sins Jesus Christ **made it possible** for ALL PEOPLE to enter into the New Covenant. The only way though that this is achievable, would be through a change of heart from stony to fleshly.

The components of the old covenants, were God, the Law and the people. The ONLY fault was with the people! Why was this? Why did they break the covenants? It was because God's law – the terms of the covenant – **was not written in their minds and on their hearts.**

Hebrews 8:10 FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: [the part that we didn't read before] I WILL **PUT MY LAWS IN THEIR MIND AND WRITE THEM ON THEIR HEARTS**; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

Consider this additional prophecy regarding the New Covenant in:

Jeremiah 32:38 'They shall be My people, and I will be their God;

Jeremiah 32:39 'then I will give them **one heart** and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them.

Again, the problem was with the people and their inability to incorporate the law of God into their hearts and minds -- NOT with the Law itself.

## Founded on Better Promises

Returning to Hebrews 8:6, we recall that the New Covenant has better promises attached to it.

The New Covenant is based on God's law, just as all the other covenants were based on God's law, and the New Covenant is not identical with God's law, just as none of the other covenants were identical with God's law. But this covenant has some elements added to it making it a better agreement! What are these better promises?

### Holy Spirit

The holy spirit was not made readily available to those in the Old Testament. With the exception of relatively few people, Israel did not have access to this power. It was not until after Christ came and did what He did that this promise was made accessible.

John 14:26 **But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, [it] will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.**

With it we have access to the mind and power of God. We are able to understand the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10-11) something that was not offered in previous covenants.

This is how we are able to receive God's Word, Law and Way into our heart – it is by the power of the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:3 clearly *you are* an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but **by the Spirit** of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, *that is, of the heart.*

Physical Israel was never able ingrain God's Way into their hearts:

Deuteronomy 5:29 **Oh, that they had such a heart in them** that they would fear Me and always **keep all My commandments**, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!

But now because of one of the better promises, the holy spirit, we can have the mind of God and Christ in us (Philippians 2:5) and live the right way and take part in the New Covenant agreement and relationship.

2 Peter 1:4 by which have been given to us exceedingly **great and precious promises**, that through these you may be **partakers of the divine nature**, having **escaped the corruption** that is in the world through lust.

## Life not Death

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were under the administration of death. The penalty for sin is death; it was then and still is now. The difference is now that upon receiving the holy spirit **we are convicted** that we need to live a different way of life, one that does not lead to sin and death.

2 Corinthians 3:4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God.

2 Corinthians 3:5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but **our sufficiency is from God,**

2 Corinthians 3:6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the **new covenant**, not of the letter but of the Spirit; **for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**

This is not speaking of giving us physical life but an everlasting, spiritual and eternal life. This was not an aspect of the old covenants, but it is an intrinsic part of the better promises.

## Forgiveness

We can have this life because Jesus Christ has paid the penalty for sin. If we avail ourselves of His sacrifice, the new covenant makes it possible, then, **to have sins forgiven**—something, as we will recall, was not possible under the previous covenants that God had made with ancient Israel.

Hebrews 10:16 "This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"

Hebrews 10:17 *then He adds,* "**Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.**"

Hebrews 10:18 Now where there is remission of these, *there is* no longer an offering for sin.

We obtain forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice. His atonement makes it possible to receive God's Holy Spirit—God's power enabling us to overcome sin and to keep God's law which has been written in our hearts. And since Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for the forgiveness of our sins, animal sacrifices are no longer necessary.

## Inheritance

The Israelites were promised a physical inheritance, such as the land of Canaan. We as spiritual Israel are in line for a better inheritance:

Hebrews 9:15 And for this reason He is the Mediator of the **New Covenant**, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the **promise of the eternal inheritance.**

The other aspect of this that we should realize is that we do not receive some small insignificant endowment, but rather we will inherit everything along with Christ:

Revelation 21:7 He who overcomes shall **inherit all things**, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

## God Family

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 we find out about an aspect of that inheritance:

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being **transformed into the same image from glory to glory**, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Through the Spirit of God, we are to be born into the Family of God. We are to become a glorified God being. That too was never a promise given to ancient Israel at the time of Mount Sinai.

## Kingship and Priestly Functions (Positions of Rulership)

In addition to all of this, we will rule with Christ for one thousand years here on earth.

Revelation 5:10 And have made us **kings and priests** to our God; And **we shall reign on the earth.**"

Revelation 20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and **judgment was committed to them**. Then *I saw* the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received *his* mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And **they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years**.

After that, for all eternity:

Revelation 22:5 There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And **they shall reign forever and ever**.

## Who can be a part of the New Covenant?

Some think that the Old Covenant was for the Israelites and that the new covenant is for the Gentiles. Nothing could be further from the truth. As we read before in Jeremiah 31:31-34:

Jeremiah 31:31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah;

Jeremiah 31:32 "**not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers [which was physical]** in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

Jeremiah 31:33 "But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel **after those days [the end time as we read before]**, 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. **[a time in the near future when God's Holy Spirit will be made available to all mankind]**

Jeremiah 31:34 "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." [**The sins that caused Him to divorce them in the first place**]

This is a critical passage that explains to us the nature of the New Covenant, and why there had to be such a New Covenant.

At first glance, it sounds a bit exclusive. We can see plainly it is not to be made with Gentiles...how do we then reconcile the fact that all will have a chance at salvation (1 Timothy 2:4)?

Romans 2:28 For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh;

Romans 2:29 but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.

Once God's holy spirit is made more readily available to mankind and they accept God and His laws in the way that they should (Hebrews 8:10), they will become a **Spiritual Jew/Spiritual Israelite** inwardly and be a party to the New Covenant.

## **Has the New Covenant Been Made Yet?**

The simple answer to this question is: Are we married to Christ yet?

We saw that God made covenants with ancient Israel, and that God will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah "after those days" (Hebrews 8:10; Jeremiah 31:33) that is, after Christ's return.

But what about those who are converted Christians today? They have been taught the conditions of the New Covenant which they accepted at the time of baptism. They have written the law of God in their mind and hearts and have become spiritual Israelites and Jews? Does this mean, then, that the New Covenant has already been made with them? Well, yes and no.

We understand that the New Covenant is a marriage agreement. The consummation of our marriage with Jesus Christ—the bridegroom—is yet to happen in the future. This is where understanding the biblical concept of betrothal becomes important.

In biblical times, the parties went through a period of "betrothal" before they actually consummated the marriage, similar to engagement, but much more binding.

Matthew 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was **betrothed** to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.

We see here that they were betrothed at this point and then reading in the next verses:

Matthew 1:19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not wanting to make her a public example, **was minded to put her away secretly.**

There would be no need to put her away if they were not already together in some way.

Matthew 1:20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your **wife**, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

She is even called his wife here before the marriage.

Betrothal was a binding agreement or contract of marriage, and it could only be severed through a divorce. With this contract, the husband had promised his wife to consummate the marriage with her, after a certain period of time.

In the same way, when we are baptized, we enter into a covenant with God and into a contract of betrothal with Jesus Christ. Though the New Covenant has not been consummated **we are to be acting like the woman** that is betrothed to be married and thus living under the terms of the New Covenant until the time of the actual marriage:

Revelation 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and **His wife has made herself ready.**"

Revelation 19:8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for **the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.**

Revelation 19:9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed *are* those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

Even we are called His wife in the time leading up to the marriage. We are expected to live a chaste and Godly life up to the and through the marriage to Christ when we fully enter the New Covenant!

\*All-caps within scriptures is a quotation from the Old Testament