

The prophet Jeremiah foretold that God would “make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” (Jeremiah 31:31). The Old Covenant between God and Israel was replaced by a “New” and “Superior” covenant. The writer of Hebrews said that Christ is “the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). He described this new covenant in terms of a “Last Will and Testament.” He said, “In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living” (Hebrews 9:16-17, NIV). Most other versions use the word “testament” in the place of “will” in that passage; yet, the context is clear from verse 15 that he is describing the “new covenant” of which Christ is the “mediator.” Hence, we may conclude that God’s covenant with Israel has been replaced with a new and better covenant, enacted on better promises. That covenant is actually the “Last Will and Testament of Jesus Christ” and it only became effective after Jesus’ death. The apostle Paul stressed the superiority of the new covenant in II Corinthians 3:7-11. He called the old covenant a “ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones.” He called it a “ministry of condemnation.” He admitted that it came with “glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses.” Yet, he said that the glory of the old covenant “has no glory” when compared to the glory of the new. He called the new covenant “the ministry of the Spirit” and “the ministry of righteousness.” He said that the first faded away but the second has remained. In Romans 8:2, Paul called the old covenant “the law of sin and death.” But he called the new covenant “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

In the early days of the church, some were teaching that compliance with the Law of Moses was necessary for a person to be saved (Acts 15:1). But New Testament writers warned the people of their day that if they relied upon those old statutes for salvation, then “Christ will be of no benefit to you” (Gal 5:2). Paul stressed that if we rely upon one aspect of that law, then we are “under obligation to keep the whole Law” (Gal 5:3). Even the Law itself was very plain on this point, as Paul quoted in Galatians 3:10, “Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them.” He said, “You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Gal 5:4). James called the New Covenant “the perfect law, the law of liberty” (James 1:25). Indeed, it was a law of liberty because it freed men from the bondage of Moses’ law. Paul said, “It was for freedom that Christ set us free,” then, referring to the Law of Moses he added, “do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal 5:1).

As we scan through the 27 books of the “New Testament,” we wonder, “Where is the list of laws?” In the Old Testament, the terms of the covenant were found between Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 34; but where do we find the terms of the New Testament? It is just here that we discover a major difference between the two testaments. The terms of the New Testament are not found in a law book, but in the form of a person. Jesus Christ said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6). Commandments chiseled on stone do not represent God’s contract with us. The New Covenant came in the form of a living, breathing person. Therein we find the terms of our contract.

And, lest we forget, it is a contract. Despite the liberty we have in Christ, the New Covenant is still a covenant. Christian liberty does not negate the demands & expectations of the covenant. The conditions and provisions of the New Covenant are all centered around Jesus: If we will listen to Him (Mt 17:5), show honor to Him (Rev 5:12-13), obey His teachings (Heb 5:8), and follow in His footsteps (I Pet 2:21) . . . then God will grant us everlasting life (Rom 6:23). The terms of the New Testament are bound up in the principles of discipleship: Jesus has all authority (Mt 28:18); He expects obedience from His disciples (Mt 7:21); He invites us to come and learn from Him (Mt 11:29); He requires us to sacrifice for Him (Rom 12:1; Gal 2:20), and follow the traditions laid down by His apostles (II Thes 2:15). Every book of the New Testament involves Jesus: The four Gospels are about His Life; the book of Acts is about His Church; the 21 Epistles reveal His Doctrine; and the book of Revelation triumphs His victory over Satan. Jesus Christ **IS** the New Testament.

1. How does the writer of Hebrews describe the New Covenant in Hebrews 8:6?
2. How does Paul compare the two covenants in II Corinthians 3:7-11?
3. When did the "Last Will & Testament" of Jesus Christ go into effect? (Hebrews 9:16-17)
4. In Romans 8:2, Paul called the _____ Covenant "the law of sin and death" and he called the _____ Covenant "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus."

What do these expressions mean?

5. What does Paul teach about trying to comply with both covenants at the same time?

Galatians 5:2 _____

Galatians 5:3 _____

Galatians 3:10 _____

Galatians 5:4 _____

6. The terms of the New Testament are not found in a law book, but in a _____. Jesus said, "I am the _____, and the _____, and the _____; no one comes to the Father _____." (John 14:6)

The conditions and provisions of the New Covenant are all centered around _____.

7. God's New Agreement with mankind is summed up in this statement:

God will grant us everlasting life (Rom 6:23) . . . IF WE WILL . . .

Matthew 17:5 _____

Revelation 5:12-13 _____

Hebrews 5:8 _____

I Peter 2:21 _____

8. The terms of the New Covenant are best seen in the conditions of Discipleship, which are:

Matthew 28:18 _____

Matthew 11:29 _____

Matthew 7:21 _____

II Thes. 2:15 _____

Galatians 2:20 _____

Romans 12:1 _____

9. Every book of the New Testament involves Jesus:

The four Gospels are about His _____

The book of Acts is about His _____

The 21 Epistles reveal His _____

The book of Revelation is about His _____

10. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:10, all things truly are summed up in _____.