

The Last Will and Testament of Jesus the Messiah

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.

16 For where there *is* a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17 For a testament *is* in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. 18 Therefore not even the first *covenant* was dedicated without blood. 19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, "This *is* the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you." 21 Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. 22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

23 Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; 25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another-- 26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. 27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (Heb. 9:15-28)

When it comes to wills and inheritances, there are many strange stories. We have probably heard of the several billionaires who left their fortunes to their dogs or cats. But there are stranger things than that. One Portuguese aristocrat left all his fortune to 70 strangers randomly chosen out of a phone book. Michigan millionaire Wellington Burt disliked his family so much that he specified that his wealth could not be inherited until 21 years after the death of his last surviving grandchild. He died in 1919, the last grandchild died in 1989, so only in 2010 did 12 people begin inheriting what was now \$110 million. On a more tender note, comedian Jack Benny died in 1974 and made provision for one red rose to be delivered to his wife every day after his death.

A will is a strange thing, when you think about it. It is a promise of what someone you love will get, but only after you are dead. It is an act of love, which only activates when you have lost the person you love.

What if the Lord Himself had a last will and testament? We might immediately dismiss that, because God is immortal, God cannot die. But what if God added to Himself a true human nature that could die? What if He had a last will and testament that would be activated upon His death?

That's exactly what the writer in Hebrews wants us to know about the new covenant. He switches to a second meaning of this word for covenant. The first meaning is that of an agreement between two parties, either conditional or unconditional. It's an agreement that one party will do or give something to the other. That's the meaning he has been using up to now. But the Greek word for covenant, *diatheke*, also means a last will and testament. That is, a legal document explaining what inheritance will come to certain people when the testator dies.

To us, those may seem very different things. But to the Greeks, there was no confusion, because for them, the gods were immortal, so they couldn't die, and yet the specified inheritance could go to certain people.

It is to this second meaning that he now shifts, and he wants us to see that the new covenant is not only an agreement between God and His people, but it is also a will with an inheritance.

Verse 15 is like a heading and summary of this whole section:

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.

Here we're going to see that the new covenant is Messiah's Last will through death, that this new covenant, Messiah Last will prepares an eternal inheritance, and Messiah's last will removes all transgressions.

I. The New Covenant is Messiah's Last Will Through His Death

And the first thing he does is remind us that what legally triggers a will to be enacted: death.

16 For where there *is* a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17 For a testament *is* in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.

My last will has no effect on the lives of my wife or children as long as I'm alive. It's my death that will bring it to pass. Writers of murder mysteries haven't failed to pick up on this theme: the unhappy wife or greedy children who have their husband or father murdered so that they can experience the wealth promised to them upon his death.

A last will and testament is only active when the one writing it dies.

So, Hebrews tells us, even the old covenant under Moses had a symbolic death so that it could be active.

18 Therefore not even the first *covenant* was dedicated without blood. 19 For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, 20 saying, "This *is* the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you." 21 Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. 22 And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

The scene he is recalling is in Exodus 24. There Moses has read out the terms of God's covenant with Israel: what God will do for Israel, what Israel must do. Having read the whole thing, Moses offered this covenant to Israel, . . . And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has said we will do." (Exod. 24:3)

So once they had accepted this, Moses then does something symbolic: 5 Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. 6 And Moses took half the blood and put *it* in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 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." 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." (Exod. 24:6-8)

Moses takes the blood of calves and goats, and apparently the writer of Hebrews knew of some additional items (water, hyssop and scarlet wool). He makes this mixture, and then he sprinkles the people of Israel, the Tabernacle and its instruments, and a copy of the Book of the Law.

Verse 22 tells us what the blood did: it purified nearly everything. It made people ritually pure. It cleansed ceremonially, and provided a temporal covering of sin.

Now, if you think about it, there are perhaps many things you wouldn't mind being sprinkled or sprayed with: water, perfume, fragrances. But how would you like to have animal blood sprayed or flecked onto you? In fact, one of the most ghastly experiences for soldiers is to have the blood of men who were killed or injured near them be sprayed on their faces and uniforms. Unless you're a doctor or a nurse, blood sprayed over you usually means you've been in the presence of death: the

scene of a car accident, a shooting, an explosion.

So what could Moses have meant with having Israel flecked with blood? If you had seen all these people walking around with blood on their faces and clothes, you would have got the message: someone has to die for this covenant to be in effect. They needed to have the sense of revulsion and horror that the sight of blood brings, along with the grief of a funeral. Death, and this death on us, on our clothes. Only if this death takes place and is a death shared with us, can we ever experience the life and forgiveness of the covenant. This covenant is the will of someone, and only upon death does it become ours.

Now the someone here was really a something – the blood of animals. But as we have seen, the death of animals was never meant to truly atone for sin, because animals are not moral beings. They were just stand-ins, symbolic substitutes of the ultimate Substitute. A moral substitute had to die in the place of moral men. A man, a perfect man needed to die, and his death be upon everyone, sprinkled upon them.

Isaiah prophesied who this Substitute would be:

3 He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, *He* was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (Isa. 53:3-6)

Messiah is the final offering to which all the offerings pointed. It is His death that triggers the last will and testament, which turns out to be the new covenant, the new testament, predicted by Jeremiah.

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.

Because His blood is infinitely more valuable than that of animals, He is the Mediator of the new covenant by death. This word mediator means an arbitrator between two parties. The two parties are God and man. Messiah Jesus can bring the promises of the new covenant to the people, and make the people acceptable to God. How? Through His death. His death, symbolised by His blood, can remove the block between God and man.

And now I want you to think of the nearly identical words to the words of Moses that the Lord used when He turned the Passover meal into the Lord's Supper: Moses had said “ This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words”

At the Last Supper, the Lord Jesus, after the bread, took the cup, saying "This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. (Lk. 22:20)

For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matt. 26:28)

This symbolises my death, which launches the new covenant. All that is your inheritance will now come to you through my death.

What happens if you are included in the last will and testament of Jesus the Messiah? You receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

II. The New Covenant Provides an Eternal Inheritance

23 Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

Messiah Jesus, like Moses, entered a Tabernacle and cleansed it. But once again, not the Holy Place made with hands, the mere copies. Three times in two verses: things in the heavens, heavenly things, heaven itself, the presence of God.

Why would Heaven itself need cleansing? Some have suggested because it was the scene of Satan's fall. It could be because sinners before the Cross were taken there. But in the end, just as you need a final covenant, and you need a final offering, so you need a final Tabernacle. The ultimate and perfect place where atonement is offered and received: Heaven itself.

But once again, we needn't think that there has to be an Ark in Heaven, or that Jesus sprinkled His literal blood. We should think rather that these things pointed to greater and more ultimate realities: God's presence, fellowship with God, communion with God. His person and work was sufficient to cleanse and prepare Heaven.

This is the final destination of God's people. The Tabernacle just represented the presence of God. But the true tabernacle is Heaven, and this is where God's people are destined to be.

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.

2 "In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also. (Jn. 14:1-3)

In fact, in the prayer of Jesus to His Father, He states that it is His will that believer be with Him in eternity in Heaven.

24 "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. (Jn. 17:24)

To be a new covenant believer is to be a heavenly-minded person. That doesn't mean you don't want to do good on earth, or be used by God on earth, or even that you don't want to enjoy the earth. But the difference between a heavenly-minded Christian and a worldly Christian is that the worldly Christian is not willing to let Heaven be his or her true inheritance. They want the goods now. Like Esau, they're willing to trade their birthright to fill their belly now. Like the prodigal son, they want their inheritance now. So they want the world: they want its money, they want its fame, they want its lifestyle, they want its entertainment, they want its sensuality, so long as they can also go to Heaven when they die. But Jesus said that doesn't happen. The one who actively seeks to gain the whole world loses his soul. The one who sets his affections on things above, who lives for ultimate and eternal realities, whose portion is God Himself, this is a new testament believer. True believers show that they are in the last will and testament of Jesus by how they eagerly wait for Him.

Now, why should the new covenant take us into Heaven? The old covenant, as we saw, had three barriers before you could access the inner presence of God. Why should the new covenant take you there? The answer is the third attribute of the new covenant.

III. The New Covenant Is a Once-For-All Atonement

Notice how many times the words “often” and “once” appear.

25 not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another-- 26 He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. 27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (Heb. 9:23-28)

As we have now seen several times, in the old covenant, there was annual atonement. The High Priest would go in with blood once every year. And if it was an exact, one-for-one correspondence between first covenant and new, then Messiah would have had to have suffered repeatedly. He would have been on the Cross again and again.

But instead, His offering of Himself is a one-time event. In fact, it is the pivotal event, so that the writer calls it the end of the ages: the completion, or consummation of human history. Human history looked forward to this moment. Every day after that day is part of the last days, the end of the ages, the final things.

In A.D. 33, in exact fulfillment of Daniel 9, He appeared in Jerusalem to put away sin. He appeared to remove it, annul it, make it obsolete as far as God and His people are concerned.

This is the inheritance of those in the last will and testament of Jesus the Messiah. All your sin is dealt with finally, completely, absolutely. Nothing is partial here, it is a complete work.

In fact, His death, actually works retroactively, to forgive those sins committed under the first covenant. If you have ever wondered how people were forgiven and saved under the first covenant, this verse is the answer: His death works both backwards and forwards: forgiving people who lived before it, and forgiving people who live after it.

Messiah presents His life as an offering once for all. He becomes an eternal sacrifice. That does not mean , that He is a perpetual sacrifice, always offered for us. No! That actually denies what Hebrews teaches: a once-for-all sacrifice, offered once, and providing a once-for-all atonement. He was once offered, and when that one offering is applied to us, we do not need it to be applied again.

Verse 27 and 28 are an analogy. Humans die once and then face judgement – heaven or hell. But Jesus died once, but with that death deals with the judgement coming to man, and instead is coming back for those who love Him. He dies, so His last will is launched, but He rises again, and is returning for those that seek Him and love Him. He appears “without sin”, simply means, no longer with reference to atoning for sin. His return is not to deal with sin this time, but to collect His own and judge the world.

Notice the three appearances of Messiah in this passage. In Verse 26, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Heb. 9:26). That's the past.

In verse 24, 24 For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; (Heb. 9:24). That's the present.

In verse 28: 28 so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (Heb. 9:28). That's the future.

Once Jesus cried out “It is Finished”, His life and death launched the new covenant, sprinkled and cleansed the people, and prepared the place for communion with God.

Now here is the strange thing about the last will and testament of Jesus the Messiah. On the one hand, the recipients of this covenant were written into the will before the world began. Revelation 17:8 tells us that names are either present or missing in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world (Rev. 17:8). These are those that verse 15 designates “the called”.

But on the other hand, being written in this book involves a real choice on your part. The last verse speaks of those who eagerly wait for Him. You are a recipient of this last will and testament if you are eagerly waiting for Jesus to take you, either to Heaven through His return, or through your death.

You see, if you are not one of His, then His death means little to you. Instead of blood spattered over you, you take up a symbolic cup, saying, by His death, I enter into all these benefits.

If you are one of His, then the true tabernacle is really your home, your longing. You're not trying to build your own kingdom here, or drain every last drop out of the dirty rag that is this world.

If you're one of His, then you are trusting completely in once-for-all atonement. Not yearly festivals. Not works of charity, or church attendance, or baptism. Complete, final atonement through Him. So you're eagerly waiting for Him to appear a second time.

Some people fantasise about being the will of a billionaire, or of royalty or nobility. But those are small fry, because they will last a few decades at most. You want to be in the last will and testament of the Messiah. You can be, if you will this day believe in Him, transfer your trust from self to Him, look to Him for atonement, and forsake this world as your Heaven and as your salvation.